

## Sellafield research finding prompts safety probe

# Leukaemia link to atom plant fathers

By Thomson Prentice, Science Correspondent, and  
Nick Nuttall, Technology Correspondent

An urgent investigation of safety at nuclear power stations was ordered by the Government yesterday after experts found that men working in the plants may conceive children with leukaemia.

The study of the disease among children born near the Sellafield plant in West Cumbria provides the strongest link yet between leukaemia "clusters" with power stations, and is certain to have international safety implications.

It found that children living in Seascale, a village near the plant, were 10 times more likely to suffer from the disease than children in the general population; and one in five of children with the disease studied had fathers who worked at Sellafield.

The Government said last night that it "noted with concern" the findings of the Medical Research Council study, and "recognized the

anxiety it must cause to those who could be at risk".

Mr Roger Freeman, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, said the report was being sent for urgent consideration by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (Comare), an independent scientific committee. The Health and Safety Executive is to investigate the case histories of affected families.

The study, led by Professor Martin Gardner, of Southampton University, suggests that radiation at Sellafield

could have affected the sperm of men working there, possibly introducing a gene mutation. Their children would then have been born with a higher-than-average risk of developing the disease.

The researchers found that the risks were not related to environmental contamination from Sellafield discharges, such as playing on the nearby beach, eating seafood or home-grown vegetables. They also dismissed the theory that a virus infecting the local population was responsible.

The study is the first of its kind in the world, and similar exercises are being set up at other sites. One at Dounreay in Caithness is to be completed as a matter of urgency.

A 1988 study by Comare into leukaemia clusters around Dounreay found six cases of childhood leukaemia between 1968 and 1984, five of whom were within eight miles of the town - three times the number that would be expected.

The scientists in the Sellafield study found that of 52 local children who had leukaemia between 1950 and 1985, 10 had fathers who worked at Sellafield. The link was strongest where the father had received particularly high doses of radiation before the child's conception.

"These findings need to be confirmed by other studies near other nuclear establishments, but they have important potential implications for radiobiology and for the protection of radiation workers and their children," Professor Gardner and colleagues say in their report, published in the *British Medical Journal* today.

Professor Alan Emery, emeritus professor of human genetics at Edinburgh University medical school, said that if it were true that a genetic mutation of workers' sperm was the cause of the disease in their children, there was no way of screening for it. He was unconvinced that the study results pointed to a genetic mutation of sperm as the cause, saying leukaemia was not a genetic disease.

The peak incidence of the most common form of childhood leukaemia is at the age of six or seven years; it declines thereafter. Two out of three cases of the disease can be cured by conventional chemotherapy. There is no test which can detect a genetic predisposition to leukaemia, either in children or adults.

Mr Bill Brett, general secretary of the Institution of Professional, Managers and Specialists, which has 9,000 members in the nuclear industry, said: "There must be prompt examination of radiation dose limits and further action to protect employees."

Mr Frank Dobson, the Labour energy spokesman, called for studies at every nuclear installation to establish the level of the health hazard; and Mr Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrat environment spokesman, demanded the immediate abandonment of the Thorp reprocessing plant being built at Sellafield and the phasing out of all reprocessing.

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BNF said it would offer medical counselling to all employees and their families, but Dr Adam Lawson, chief medical officer, said the study proved radiation was not the sole cause of leukaemia. The report was a "superb, first-class academic paper" and a pointer to where further research should be done, but its findings had to be kept in perspective.

"The report covers a period of 36 years, when there were 74 cases of leukaemia in West Cumbria. Of that 74, only 10 involved parents of children who worked at Sellafield, showing that radiation in itself cannot be the cause of leukaemia and there must be some other factors," he said.

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Child of Sellafield: Gemma D'Arcy, aged six, the third cancer victim at her school, with her father Stephen, a Sellafield worker who is taking legal action against British Nuclear Fuels

## Britain and Argentina restore diplomatic ties

From Andrew McEwen, Diplomatic Editor, Madrid, and Michael Kripe in London

In an accord ending eight years of bitterness, Britain and Argentina last night agreed to resume diplomatic relations and lift the 150-mile Protection Zone around the Falklands. It is to be replaced with a system of exchanges of military information.

The agreement, which was announced in Madrid at a joint Anglo-Argentine press conference after talks which ran on longer than expected, clears the way for the two countries to exchange ambassadors. Sir Crispin Tickell, Britain's permanent representative to the United Nations, and Señor Garcia del

Solar, his Argentine counterpart, made the announcement.

A diplomat in the talks said it had taken much longer to renew relations between the two countries than it had between Britain and Germany

after the Second World War. Even in the last hours of negotiation there were delays caused by differences over the wording of the final communiqué.

Neither side changed its position on the sovereignty of the Falklands, which was not

discussed but is likely to be the subject of a *démarche* by the Argentine authorities.

New security arrangements are to come into force from March 31. These will involve both sides giving advance notice of military manoeuvres

Talks on fisheries are to continue and arrangements for visits by Argentinians to war cemeteries in the Falklands are to be worked out through the Red Cross.

President Menem of Argentina has made it clear that he does not regard the sovereignty of the Falklands as an urgent issue, so it remained off the agenda.

## Ligachov fights hired labour

By Daniel Treisman

Mr Yegor Ligachov, the hardline Politburo member, yesterday promised to fight the introduction of private hired labour in the Soviet Union and threatened to take the battle outside the party.

Speaking on BBC2's *Newsnight* television programme as the Supreme Soviet in Moscow began a debate on the subject, Mr Ligachov said: "I

shall fight to try to convince people... it's a question of the way of life."

"I shall try to prove my point outside the party, if that is necessary. But that's also a hypothetical question."

Mr Ligachov, considered the leading orthodox Communist in the party apparatus, has never made a secret of his opposition to private owner-

ship of property and other aspects of the free market.

At last week's Central Committee plenum he spoke against "opening the slightest crack to permit the introduction of private ownership" and called for a national referendum on the issue.

In last night's interview, he said he favoured an economy

## Major rules out relief on mortgages and interest

By Robin Oakley and Nicholas Wood

Mr John Major, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, yesterday virtually ruled out an increase in the mortgage tax relief ceiling in the Budget next month.

He also offered no hope of an early reduction in interest rates, despite the alarm in Conservative circles at the political fallout from the record increase in mortgage rates to 15.4 per cent by the Abbey National.

Mr George Younger, manager of the Prime Minister's campaign in the Tory leadership contest last year, conceded yesterday in a BBC radio interview: "There will be some people who have mortgages who are already very extended for whom this is the last straw. That is very unfortunate indeed and that will have some effect in the local elections."

There is a growing conviction among Tory MPs - reflected in ministerial ranks - that bitter defeats lie ahead in the Mid-Shropshire parliamentary by-election and the May local elections, thanks to interest rates and the poll tax.

Ministers are sticking grimly to the line that inflation is the worst evil and that the battle against inflation, requiring continued high interest rates, must have priority. But they recognize that they will pay a heavy penalty unless that policy shows noticeable dividends by the time of this year's autumn party conferences.

Mr Major, yesterday was reminded by his party's MPs that those suffering the effects

of high interest rates, notably small businessmen, were not the people responsible for the economic policies which had made them necessary.

The Chancellor admitted that the high rates were "difficult and painful" for homebuyers. His comments came after the Cabinet had spent 20 minutes discussing the economy and the strains in Tory

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rankings imposed by the record mortgage level, continued high interest rates and the unpopularity of the poll tax.

There was, however, some good news for ministers. Despite widespread expectation that the long run of falling unemployment figures would come to an end, yesterday's unemployment total fell for the forty-second consecutive month.

Unemployment dropped by 23,200 to 1,611,000 on a seasonally adjusted basis. Britain's 5.7 per cent jobless rate is substantially lower than the European Community average.

In a clash over mortgage rates between Mr Neil Kinnock and the Prime Minister at Question Time, the Labour leader accepted what he called her "confession" that it was government economic policies which were responsible for the present level of mortgage rates.

Barclays Bank said yesterday that it would hold its mortgage rate until May 1.

## Tunnel cash crisis

By John Bell, City Editor

The £7.2 billion channel tunnel project is days away from running out of cash after a refusal by Transmanche Link, the construction consortium, to accept proposed management changes at Eurotunnel.

At the beginning of January, Eurotunnel had £50 million of cash resources available but now has enough money to last less than two weeks.

New bank financing, agreed in January, was to tide Eurotunnel over until May. But it hinged on the signature of an agreement between

Eurotunnel and TML, which is understood to want the British co-chairman, Mr Alastair Morton, removed from day-to-day involvement with the construction project. He was named deputy chairman and chief executive as part of a top management reshuffle yesterday.

"TML hasn't yet signed certain documents and has informed the agent banks and Eurotunnel that it isn't yet willing to do so," Eurotunnel said.

Full report, page 21

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**INSIDE**

**Burst bubble?**

How will the world's most successful mineral water bring itself back from its greatest crisis? Page 10

**TOMORROW**

**The small print**

Appellation contrôlée... Mis en bouteille... grand cru... Confused by the language of wine labels? Tomorrow, in the Saturday Review section, *The Times* wine writer, Jane MacGillivray, explains how to read between the lines of the French bottles

**Portfolio**

**PLATINUM**

One person won yesterday's Portfolio Platinum prize of £4,000. Today's chance to win £2,000 is on page 29

**Tickets claim**

Hundreds of tickets for the rugby union international at Twickenham tomorrow were stolen from a former England player, Mike Burton, to expose a black-market racket, it was claimed in court. Page 40

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## Scientists doubt Perrier line on benzene source

By Mark Souster

Scientists yesterday cast doubt on the explanation by Perrier of how its natural mineral water became contaminated with benzene, which has been linked with cancer.

They said it was unheard of for benzene to be produced naturally and the contamination of the naturally carbonated mineral water was more likely to have occurred through man-made pollution seeping into the spring. But they emphasized there was no health risk to the public.

M Gustave Leven, Perrier's chairman, said on Wednesday that the contamination was the result of "a human error" when filters in its bottling plant at Vergèze, south-west France, were not replaced on schedule. He said that the

spring remained pure. He said that benzene, which has caused cancer in laboratory animals and other chemicals were naturally present, albeit in minute amounts, in the spring.

The company uses filters to remove such impurities, he said, but for some reason they were not changed when they

should have been. "There was therefore an accumulation of benzene."

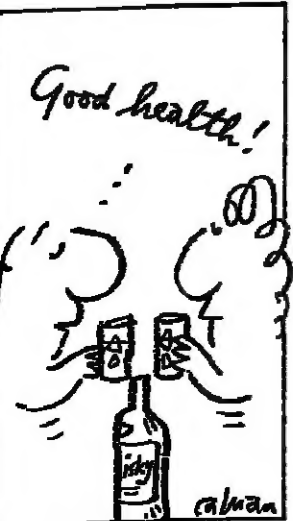
That statement changed the company's account of how the benzene got into the bottles. When the chemical was found in Perrier in the US, company officials said it had occurred because a worker had mistakenly used a cleaning solvent containing benzene to remove

grease and grime from production equipment.

Experts yesterday said that naturally-produced benzene was unheard of. Dr John Fawell, principal toxicologist at the Water Research Centre, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire, said: "It is just not credible that this is naturally occurring."

Dr Stephen White, principal drinking water scientist at Thames Water, said: "I would question the validity of Perrier's statement. It seems unlikely."

As remaining bottles of Perrier were removed from UK supermarket shelves, the company's rivals made contingency plans to exploit the gap in the market. Plans to close the Buxton Mineral Water plant for two weeks' maintenance were postponed immediately and production stepped up from eight to 24 hours a day.





## NEWS ROUNDUP

## Strike vote likely by Mersey crews

More than 500 ambulance men and women on Merseyside are likely to defy their national union leaders and vote for an all-out indefinite strike (Tim Jones writes). Last night, Mr Ray Clayton, branch secretary of the National Union of Public Employees, said he expected the result, to be announced on Monday, to be overwhelmingly in favour of a total stoppage.

The ballot is being held in spite of the insistence of Mr Roger Poole, the unions' chief negotiator, and his colleagues that the 1999 emergency service must be maintained. Union leaders, who on Wednesday instructed crews to refuse to obey instructions from chief ambulance officers and senior managers, fear that any move to turn the six-month dispute into a strike would lose public support.

Mr Clayton said: "For three months, 150 of our staff have been without pay. We now have about 100 accident and emergency staff in the same position." He said his staff had "toed the national line all the way so far and had done this out of growing frustration".

## Welsh actors held

Bryn Fôn, a Welsh singer and actor, and his girl friend were being questioned by police in Wales last night in connection with the underground movement Mision Glynidwr (Ruth Gledhill writes). Mr Fôn, aged 35, was taken from his home at Nazareth, near Pen-y-fryn, in Gwynedd, north Wales, to the police station at Dolgellau on Wednesday. Hours later, his girl friend, Anna Wyn Williams, was taken to the station.

Yesterday Mr Meirion Jones, an actor, was arrested at Llangernyw, near Abergyle, and was released on bail. A third actor, Mr Dafydd Thomas, aged 41, was arrested in London.

## Labour MP's threat

A Labour MP is threatening to take legal action against the party over its alleged failure to investigate complaints that he was sexually abused by a friend (Nigel Williamson writes). Mr John Hughes, the left-wing MP for Coventry North-east, whose replacement by Mr Bob Ainsworth has already been endorsed by Labour's National Executive, has drawn up a 200-page dossier of complaints regarding the vote. A verbal report will be given to the executive on Monday.

## Piper inquiry ends

The Piper Alpha public inquiry into the world's worst offshore oil disaster, in which 167 people died on July 6, 1988, ended in Aberdeen yesterday after almost 13 months in session. Originally expected to last for only a few months, the inquiry set a record as Britain's longest disaster hearing. It sat for 180 days, hearing 260 witnesses, at an estimated cost to the state of over £4 million. The inquiry's report is expected to be published later this year.

## Four die in car crash

Three adults and a baby were killed last night when their car travelling north collided with an articulated lorry on the A1 Morpeth bypass in Northumberland. Firemen had to cut the victims free from the wreckage of the car. The road was closed to traffic and police are investigating the cause. Four police ambulances were sent as no others were available due to the ambulance staff pay dispute. The crash victims have not been named.

## Drinkers on the binge

As many as 300,000 people in Wales go on a harmful drinking binge at least once a week, a survey by the Health Promotion Authority suggests. Amid concern that Wales is one of the worst regions for alcohol abuse, the report shows that young men in manual jobs are the worst binge drinkers. "Binge drinking" was defined as the equivalent of five pints of beer or 10 single whiskies for men, and, for women, as seven single gins or seven glasses of wine.

## Defence industry

## Transition role for staff is proposed

By Michael Evans, Defence Correspondent

The Government should take steps to help the defence industry begin converting some of its production lines for non-military products, Mr Martin O'Neill, Labour spokesman on defence, said yesterday.

He said disarmament was already under way and it was the Government's responsibility to ensure that the skills and expertise of those employed in defence work were not wasted. He proposed that an arms conversion agency be set up to provide training for skilled defence workers to switch to new areas of civilian production and technology.

Mr O'Neill, addressing a conference at the Centre for Product Development Services in Sheffield, added: "The work should start now. Disarmament is already happening. The consequent reduction in arms production must be the engine for change."

"The reduction in demand for the output of the armaments industry means that it is the management and the workers who are looking for new markets and new products on which to expend their skills and capabilities."

Mr O'Neill said the 500,000 employees involved in the British defence industry represented one of the greatest concentrations of skilled labour in the world. It would be "criminally wrong to assume



Mr O'Neill: "Disarmament is already happening."

## Sellafield cancer victim 'not surprised by findings'

By Ronald Faux

After a painful battle against cancer the findings of Professor Martin Gardner's report did not surprise Vivien Hope, aged 23, of Seale, Cambridgeshire. Two years ago she developed Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a disease linked directly to radiation.

Her father, David, retired last year. He had worked at the British Nuclear Fuels plant at Sellafield for 32 years as a fitter, spending much of the time in radioactive areas.

Vivien, who spent a year in a wheelchair after intensive chemotherapy and bone marrow transplant, at one stage had tumours attacking her spine, kidneys and neck glands. Her recovery has startled medical staff at the hospital in Newcastle where she was treated but yesterday she said that early in

her treatment the family had been told by medical specialists that the cause of her illness could have been a defective gene from her father transferred at conception.

Vivien worked for three years as a technical clerk for contractors at the Sellafield plant a few miles from the family home in Lingmell Crescent, Seale. She now walks with the help of a stick and the Hopes are one of the families taking legal action against BNFL.

Mr Hope said: "I never used to think anything about the stories of radiation damage. Until it hits your own family you never do and the whole of West Cumbria depends on the BNFL plant."

"We thought the cause could have been something like this at the time and the medical people mentioned it as a possibility two years ago, but

then there are quite a few cases that do not fit the pattern."

In Cleator Moor, 10 miles from the Sellafield plant, Mr Stephen D'Arcy, aged 30, a BNFL worker, had returned from the hospital in Newcastle where his daughter Gemma, aged six, is being treated for cancer.

"She is very ill and has just undergone bone marrow transplant but she is in little pain. She has no white blood cells at all. They may not come back, we just don't know. But the doctors are optimistic," he said as he learnt of the report suggesting that defective genes transferred at conception from the father's sperm could be at the root of some cancers.

Gemma is the third child at St Patrick's Infant School in Cleator Moor to contract cancer in the past

three years. The other two died. Last year a second daughter the D'Arcy family hoped could provide bone marrow for Gemma was stillborn.

The D'Arcys have joined the legal action against BNFL although Mr D'Arcy admitted it felt like biting the hand that fed them. He said his work with a contractor at the nuclear plant had put him in "active" radiation areas for two years. There was no option to working at Sellafield. "If I didn't go there we would not eat," he said.

Other parents in Seale questioned about the report said they had not yet had a chance to discover the details. Some wondered if it was "yet another scare" and that such stories exaggerated the numbers involved.

One woman said there were 14,000 people working at the plant and that thousands more depended

on it. Workers at Sellafield were told about the findings before they left work yesterday and shop stewards were last night considering their response. BNFL has said the report came from a respectable source but it did not believe it established a link between radioactive discharges from the plant and childhood leukaemia.

"We welcome research and we always have welcomed research into this area but this report finds no correlation between radioactive discharges and such factors as playing on the beach, eating local seafood or walking on the fells, which might reflect differences in exposure to radioactivity."

"It seems to be saying the main danger is from the people but only 10 of the 74 children involved over a 36-year period were children whose fathers worked at Sellafield."

## Protest on student loans brings traffic to a standstill



Protesting students, flanked by police, marching across Chelsea Bridge, London, yesterday on their way to Hyde Park to demonstrate against the loans Bill.

By Sam Kiley  
Higher Education Reporter

Thousands of students marched through Chelsea and Mayfair, Police deployed helicopters, and large numbers of officers with riot equipment waited in reserve, the result of violent clashes between mounted police and students on the last national demonstration in London two years ago.

Nine students were arrested and two policemen slightly injured during scuffles. The loans Bill is expected to get a harsh ride through the House of Lords in a fortnight's time when senior backbench Tory peers, notably Lord Beloff, John Labour and Democrat peers are expressing disquiet about the proposals.

The Government plans to freeze student maintenance grants at 1990 levels (about £2,500 a year for those eligible for the maximum).

Mr Neil Kinnock was last night snubbed by left-wing teachers who walked out of a meeting he was due to address in the Central Hall, Westminster. More than 400 teachers brought to Parliament by the National Union of Teachers to lobby MPs over pay left the hall moments before Mr Kinnock was due to speak to attend an alternative meeting in the Commons addressed by Mr Robert Cser, Labour MP for Bradford South.

News of the deserted hall reached Mr Kinnock's private office and his speech was cancelled. Mr Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the union, said: "It's the first time in my experience that an NUT lobby has been divided by the deliberate organization of an alternative meeting."

The alternative meeting was organized by the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union.

Mr McAvoy said rising interest rates and poor pay was making recruitment and retention of teachers more difficult.

The 3,000 members of the Association of Polytechnic Teachers yesterday voted to accept a 6.5 per cent pay offer back-dated to April 1 last year plus a further 1 per cent from last September from the Polytechnics and Colleges Employers Forum.

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## Food experts want strict laws to control manufacturers and outlets

Experts investigating the rise in food poisoning cases have recommended that strict laws be introduced to control the food industry and have urged the Government to implement measures to ensure that all food outlets are inspected before being allowed to trade.

A report produced by a team of experts under the chairmanship of Sir Mark Richmond, Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University, was published by Mr Kenneth Clarke, Secretary of State for Health, yesterday.

The committee recommended tighter controls for the poultry industry and said that managers and supervisors in the food manufacturing

industry must be properly trained in the hazards of food poisoning organisms and that staff in outlets should by law have to be adequately trained.

It also highlighted an urgent need for a better understanding of the potentially fatal disease of listeria.

Mr Clarke welcomed the report as "constructive and thorough", and said: "We shall follow up positively its many useful recommendations. We trust that others to whom recommendations are addressed, in particular the food industry and environmental health authorities, will examine it to see how the level of food safety in this country can be further raised."

The committee's proposal

for the introduction of licensing of food outlets goes further than the Government's plans, which involve all premises having to register with a local authority without the need for inspection before they open for business.

The committee said there was a "considerable advantage in prior inspection and approval before a food business is opened or a process started".

Mr Clarke said the proposals went further than the Government felt necessary. "We do, however, see the value of the committee's views on prior notification and we intend to introduce a simple system of prior registration which would not im-

pose unnecessary administrative burdens but would help business and enforcement authorities alike."

Professor Richard Lacey, the food safety critic, said the committee's report would only help "a little" to control food poisoning. "The real issue, I believe - the nature of the food processing industry - is not being addressed there."

Professor Lacey, professor of microbiology at Leeds University, said the report "will also tend to favour the large food produce companies of which the membership of this committee is comprised".

The committee included representatives from Unilever, Trusthouse Forte, Cadbury Schweppes and Sains-

bury's. He added: "I think this is heavily biased towards tending to blame most of our problems on the food sellers. What we need to sort out is the food processing industry."

"I welcome reservedly the need to improve outlets, but I am very much aware, in so doing, this will benefit the large companies and fails to address the current defects in the food processing industry."

In spite of increased awareness of the need for food hygiene, figures show an increase in 1989 of the most common types of food poisoning. Last year there were more than 60,000 cases in total with just under 30,000 people hit by salmonella, compared with 27,478 in 1988.

## Contamination fears

## Farmers demand cattle feed labels

By Michael Hornsby, Agriculture Correspondent

Animal feed manufacturers are being pressed to list the ingredients in their products in the wake of crises linked to contaminated feed.

These have included lead in imported cattle cake, the "mad cow" disease BSE, which is believed to have been caused by feeding cattle the remains of scrapie-infected sheep, and salmonella in poultry feeds and eggs.

Manufacturers are not required by law to say in any detail what they put into their feed, but merely to declare the broad proportions of proteins, fibre, oil, minerals and vitamins it contains with some information on the energy content.

This week delegates to the annual general meeting of the National Farmers' Union voted unanimously for a resolution calling for a change in the law making a detailed declaration of the ingredients in feed compulsory. New regulations adopted by the

EC's Council of Agriculture Ministers, including Mr John Gummer for Britain, last month will require feed companies to list individual ingredients, or categories of ingredients, by descending order of weight.

But those regulations will not come into force for at least 18 months. There is also likely to be argument over how the concept of "categories" is defined - whether it would be enough simply to say "cereals" or whether the type of grain would have to be specified.

"We will be pressing the minister to try to speed up the process," Mr David Naish, the union vice-president, said. "If we are to be held responsible for the safety of the food we produce, we must know what is in the bag of feed we buy from the merchant."

Dr David Clark, Labour spokesman on agriculture, said: "We very much welcome the new EC regulations. We

would hope that animal feed companies will not drag their heels but anticipate the regulations by complying with them even before they have been implemented."

But the food companies indicated yesterday that they would continue to resist full exposure on the grounds that they would be disclosing commercial secrets and that it would push up the price of animal feed.

"We spent about £2 million a year on research and development, much of which goes on nutritional aspects of our diets," Mr Tim Brigstocke, chief agricultural adviser of BOCM Silcock, the biggest animal feed manufacturer in Britain with about 20 per cent of the market, said.

"By disclosing exact details of our formulations we would be making the results of our research available to everybody. We think that is unfair."

Farm nutrition has become a sophisticated science in

which computers are used to formulate feeds to achieve maximum results with the lowest-cost ingredients in a competitive market.

Manufacturers say that ingredients may have to be changed from day to day, even from hour to hour, and relabelling sacks every time would be difficult if not impossible.

"The price and quality of raw materials often vary widely. A lot of the skill lies in varying the ingredients in the formula so as to preserve the ration below that being offered by your competitor."

Mr Pat Lake, who buys raw materials for Bibby, another big feed company, said:

"Under the proposed new labelling requirements, we would not have the same flexibility to change the formula when the cost of ingredients rises. That could mean that we have to put up the prices of our rations."

## Mackay proposes to widen review over libel awards

By Frances Gibb, Legal Affairs Correspondent

A package of reforms to curb excessive libel awards and other measures to cut delays and costs in libel cases was announced by the Lord Chancellor yesterday.

The main change would give the Court of Appeal power to increase or reduce libel damages where it considers these have been excessive or inadequate. Now that can only be done if the parties agree. The only other option at present is for the Court of Appeal to order a new trial.

Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, said the measures were aimed at securing "more appropriate awards without reducing the role of the jury".

The reforms come in the wake of increasingly large libel awards, culminating in Christmas with that of £1.5 million in the libel action brought by Lord Aldington against Count Nikolai Tolstoy and Mr Nigel Watts.

Lord Mackay said yesterday: "The Government has examined the current issues and complaints relating to the law of defamation and has found that there are justified criticisms."

The package, contained in an amendment tabled by the Government to the Courts

and Legal Services Bill, stems from a review set up by the Lord Chancellor last May.

The main reforms propose greater powers for the Court of Appeal to increase or reduce libel damages where an award goes up to that court on appeal. At present, Lord Mackay said, the Court of Appeal had inadequate powers of review in such cases.

"Even if the Court of Appeal considers that a jury award is excessive or inadequate it can only substitute its own award if both parties agree."

Otherwise, he said, "the court was limited to ordering a new trial, involving further delay and expense to the parties." He emphasized that the role of the jury would not be changed.

In a second reform, the rules for pleadings, the written preparation of arguments in libel cases, are to be reviewed by the Supreme Court procedure committee. These rules have been criticized as complex.

In a third move, Lord Mackay said he wanted to consider whether some categories of libel case should be heard in the county court. The first step was to see if the rules could be simplified.

## Prosecution costs doubled under CPS

By Sheila Gunn, Political Reporter

The costs of criminal prosecutions have almost doubled since the Crown Prosecution Service took over handling court cases from the police.

The findings of the Commons public accounts committee yesterday follow severe criticism of the CPS, set up in 1986, and given to MPs as part of the Commons home affairs committee's investigation.

The cross-party PAC reported that the service cost £134 million in 1987/88 compared to a previous budget for prosecutions of £70 million. Originally the Home Office estimated that setting up the CPS would require 2,500 staff and release 600 police officers for other duties. But staffing needs had risen to 4,829 and the saving in police time has been much less than expected, although the PAC found it difficult to estimate.

"In these circumstances we find it surprising that more than two-and-a-half years

after becoming operational, the service had not fully met the initial objectives set by the Government, mainly because it still did not have enough staff," the report said.

It singles out the use of agent lawyers to fill the gaps left by severe staff shortages as the main cause of higher costs. Last year £7.4 million had to be spent on employing agents.

The PAC backed up criticism from the police about the number of court cases dropped by the CPS but found wide variations. For instance, 13.4 per cent of prosecution proceedings were discontinued in West Yorkshire compared with only 2.4 per cent in Nottinghamshire.



## Wapping violence

## Police chiefs reject criticisms over handling of protest

By Stewart Tendler, Crime Correspondent

Scotland Yard yesterday admitted mistakes were made in policing a mass demonstration at New International's Wapping plant three years ago, but rejected a number of key criticisms in a report by Northamptonshire police.

The report found that the police chain of command broke down; officers in charge of mounted police saw their orders changed by a deputy assistant commissioner; and there was "indiscriminate" use of truncheons.

But the report, a summary of which was published by the Police Complaints Authority yesterday, added that only a very small number of the 1,400 officers on duty behaved badly, and a "hard core" of protesters was intent on violent confrontation with police when 12,000 demonstrators gathered to mark the first anniversary of the Wapping dispute on January 24, 1987.

The summary says the demonstration was twice the size expected. It included family groups and had started good-humouredly, but the mood changed as the march reached Wapping.

A lorry was overturned, and in just 33 seconds more than 200 pieces of concrete and broken paving stone flew at police lines. A severed pig's head wearing a policeman's helmet was impaled on the railings outside the News International plant near the police cordon, and at the end of the night, more than three tons of missiles — including cast-iron railings, scaffolding poles, fence posts, half-bar-

ings and bottles — were collected. One hundred and ninety-four policemen and 99 other people were injured.

The summary published yesterday says: "It is a matter of conjecture whether the violence was spontaneous or orchestrated and planned", but it notes that speakers on a platform near by refused to urge demonstrators not to throw missiles.

While praising police efforts, the summary criticizes breaches in the command structure, training, and failure to use intelligence correctly. It says that at one stage the top management collapsed, as Deputy Assistant Commissioner Wynn Jones, who was not on the scene, intervened to stop horses being used.

It also says that one central officer was isolated without an overall view. "The command structure and its support mechanism established to police the demonstration contained weaknesses which from the outbreak of disorder inevitably manifested themselves in such a way that no person could be considered to be in effective command of the operation as a whole."

Some units lacked experience, manpower and equipment yet acted professionally and with discipline in spite of extreme provocation; but a number of public order units used their truncheons indiscriminately, and "profoundly challenged" other criticisms.

During the inquiry into the handling of the demonstration, 114 officers were interviewed and more than 30 charged. Their cases have been adjourned pending an appeal to the House of Lords.

## Honours for military family

MICHAEL POWELL



Colonel Graham Owens, of the Royal Engineers, and his daughter, Captain Philippa Owens, outside Buckingham Palace yesterday after Colonel Owens was invested with the insignia of the CBE and his daughter with that of the MBE. Colonel Owens was honoured for his work at the Joint Air Transport Establishment, and his daughter, Captain Owens, for her work at the 30th Signal Regiment in Namibia on UN duties. The investiture was held by the Prince of Wales. The boxer Frank Bruno received the insignia of the MBE.

## £4,000 prize-winner

The latest winner in *The Times* Portfolio Platinum competition, Mr Peter Huish, was taking his £4,000 windfall in his stride yesterday.

"I'm in my seventies now so I have to take things a little easy," he said. "I've read *The Times* for years, but I'm not a habitual checker of the Portfolio numbers. But when I did this time they just clicked. I'm very grateful to have won."

Mr Huish retired from his post as the superintendent of a Plymouth insurance firm several years ago and now lives quietly with his wife at nearby Newton Ferris.

He has no immediate plans for a celebration or a spending spree. "I think it will be invested for the future, although I do have



Mr Huish: "I am very grateful to have won."

two grandchildren getting married in the next six months, so I suspect some of it will go there."

## New 'charge cap' warning on high poll tax

By Richard Ford, Political Correspondent

The Government yesterday amplified its warning to local authorities that it would "charge cap" those setting excessive community charge levels amid alarm that many will set a figure above Department of the Environment recommendations.

A series of ministerial statements on charge capping were seen at Westminster as an attempt to put pressure on local authorities, particularly the shire counties, to moderate spending proposals before budgets are set next month.

Ministers said they would act against councils of any political persuasion whose budgets resulted in an excessive community charge.

Mr Bryan Gould, Labour spokesman on the environment, said the Government's action showed how badly it had miscalculated its own assessment of what local authorities had to spend.

He said: "The Government's poll tax chickens are coming home to roost with a vengeance. The reality is that in order to maintain services, the majority of authorities, including many Tory councils, will fix the poll tax at levels way above government predictions."

He said: "Charge capping is very bad news for poll tax payers. Not only is it an admission that their bills are going to be much higher. In addition to this, they will also suffer cuts in services and massive job losses."

As the opposition accused

the Government of "bullying" local authorities, the Prime Minister led the assault on high-spending local authorities. She told MPs there was no justification in Lancashire County Council's proposed budget which was the equivalent of a 30 per cent rates rise.

Mrs Thatcher said: "The Secretary of State for the Environment has made it perfectly clear that if authorities continue to spend excessively we will not hesitate to cap them."

The shire authorities must set their projected budgets by March 1 with district and metropolitan councils having a deadline of March 11.

In an effort to influence both Conservative and Labour authorities which are at present finalizing their budgets for the forthcoming year, Mr David Hunt, Minister for Local Government, said: "Whatever the political complexion we shall not hesitate to act if we need to."

He said: "If some of the horrendously high figures which are being banded about at present do result in excessive budgets being set, which would in turn result in excessive community charging, we shall not hesitate to cap authorities."

Mr Hunt said he hoped that councils considering excessive levels of spending would rein back on their plans.

Sir Geoffrey Howe, the leader of the House, said local authorities which budgeted prudently and sensibly had nothing to fear.

## Daughter tells how she tried to stop MP's suicide

By David Saped

Mr John Heddle's daughter tried to persuade the MP not to kill himself three days before his body was found in his fume-filled Jaguar at a Kent chalcipit, an inquest was told yesterday.

Mr Heddle, Conservative MP for Mid-Staffordshire, had a history of depression stretching back to the early 1970s and had attempted suicide before, Miss Caroline Heddle told the inquest in Canterbury.

Miss Heddle, a veterinary surgeon and the eldest of four children from the MP's first marriage, said her father had been particularly depressed since last September because of financial problems and

pressure of work. Mr Heddle saw his daughter on the Friday evening before his death on December 19. He was "very depressed, very down", she told Mr Richard Sturt, the East Kent coroner.

"He said he had been through bad times before but he couldn't see any way out this time. He said sometimes suicide was the only way out. I told him that suicide wasn't the answer... wasn't the solution to the problem," Miss Heddle said.

Mr Heddle was found in his blue XJS Jaguar little more than 72 hours later, a plastic pipe running from the exhaust and into the car through the passenger window.

On his lap were a handwritten

note, his youngest son's school report, a black and white photograph and a card addressed to "Pansy". A towel had been used to plug the gap in the car window around the hose.

The inquest was told that Mr Heddle, aged 48, whose address was given as Belgrave, west London, would have been overcome by carbon monoxide fumes within three minutes of the pipe being attached.

His car was spotted in the early morning at the chalcipit close to Canterbury by a passing coalman, and he was declared dead on arrival at Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

Det Chief Inspector David

Burchill said that, after extensive inquiries, he was "completely satisfied" no other person had been involved in the MP's death.

Miss Heddle said although the threat of prosecution in Spain had been hanging over her father since an altercation with a traffic policeman there last summer, she did not consider it sufficient reason, in itself, for him to have committed suicide.

Her father had received treatment for depression and Miss Heddle said her mother, who died in 1988, had told her that her father had tried once before to kill himself, although she did not know how.

The coroner said there was no

escape from the conclusion that the MP had taken his own life. "The community has lost a very great public servant. This was a man who had given so much, and who still had so much more to give," Mr Sturt said.

Mr Heddle had been MP for Mid-Staffordshire since 1979 and was a former chairman of the Conservatives' parliamentary environment committee. His business interests included being an underwriting member of Lloyds and a consultant surveyor.

The by-election in his constituency will take place next month. He had a majority of 14,650 at the last general election.

## Move to post at the Yard



Miss Marcia Barton, aged 46, who today clears her desk as a senior local government pay negotiator in Belgrave Square, London, to become general secretary to the Association of Chief Police Officers, representing Britain's top policemen, at Scotland Yard. The association, which covers ranks from assistant chief constable upwards, has only three women among its 280 members.

## Mortgage interest rise

## Borrowers wait for the inevitable

By Christopher Warman, Property Correspondent

By late afternoon yesterday, the manager of the Abbey National's Cambridge branch, where many people have taken out large mortgages in the past two years, had received two letters and two telephone calls from borrowers asking for help.

It was not a dramatic response to the increase in mortgage interest rates to a record 15.4 per cent, but the manager, Mr Neville Oakes, said, "a lot of our borrowers have a sense of the inevitable. The effects will only come when they receive their monthly bills."

Mr Oakes and his colleagues in other branches are operating the equivalent of a hot-line for customers. "If the difficulty is about the mortgage

payment only, then I will ask what payment can be made. If a borrower says he could pay £400 but not £450, then he would be allowed to do that for a period.

"We will do everything we can to keep him as a customer. Possession of a house because of arrears is the very last resort, and I would go tap dancing on a coffee table if that was a way to avoid it."

Mr Oakes said the March 1988 budget, which gave people until August to take advantage of multiple tax relief, had encouraged them to borrow to the limit. "Since then, salaries have increased by perhaps 20 per cent, while mortgage payments have gone up by 50 to 60 per cent."

Abbey National is advising

borrowers to contact the company immediately about problems. "We have expert counsellors in each branch, and each branch manager has discretion about how it offers help," a spokesman said.

The usual temporary solution is to allow the borrower to pay what he or she can, and make up the difference later. The Abbey National is not keen on lengthening the repayment period. Nor does it like the idea of taking the property into possession and then renting it out to the former borrower. "That tends to prolong the problem," it said.

A London homeowner whose £100,000 property was the subject of a court order for possession was allowed to keep it after a hearing at West

London County Court yesterday. His monthly repayments had soared to £1,200 a month after a rise in his mortgage interest rate from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. The court, held in camera, allowed him to continue payments on the same terms as at present.

Mr John Evans, head of the Devon and Cornwall force, is to ask a police authority finance committee meeting in Truro, Cornwall for a relocation package to be made available for police officers.

Thirty-five officers transferred to other stations after promotion were living apart from their families because the housing slump meant they could not sell their homes. Some had been separated more than a year.

## Guinness trial embarks on its third fresh beginning

By Paul Wilkinson

Protagonists in the Guinness case gather this morning at Southwark Crown Court, south London, in the hope that the trial will get under way after two false starts this week.

Success hinges on selecting 12 jurors from a panel of 25 people who assured Mr Justice Henry that they had the stamina to last the six months the trial could run.

In the trial Mr Ernest Saunders, the former chairman and chief executive of the Guinness brewing group, and three leading City figures face 24 counts of theft, false accounting and breaches of the Companies Act arising from the Guinness takeover of Distillers in 1986.

Mr Saunders, aged 54, of

Putney, west London; Mr Gerald Ronson, 50, from Hampstead, north London, chairman of Heron International; Mr Anthony Parnes, 44, of London, a City stockbroker; and Sir Jack Lyons, 74, of Kensington, west London, a financier and arts patron, deny the charges.

They are alleged to have undertaken an illegal share support operation to ensure the success of the Distillers takeover.

The first attempt to open the case, on Monday, foundered when two jurors who had originally said they could serve returned on Tuesday to say that business and domestic commitments meant they could not continue.

Two more people were

sworn in from a reserve panel, the indictment was read again to the jury, and the prosecuting counsel, Mr John Chadwick, QC, began his opening.

On Wednesday, as he was about to continue laying out the case, a third juror said that the threat of a recurrent migraine must force her to stand down. A fourth was said to be under pressure over her absence from work for so long.

After consulting counsel, the judge discharged the jury and ordered the selection of a new panel. The need to have a big enough pool of potential jurors meant the cancellation of all new trials at the Central Criminal Court that day.

The 25 selected were given yesterday off to sort out domestic arrangements.

## Police début for lightweight rifle

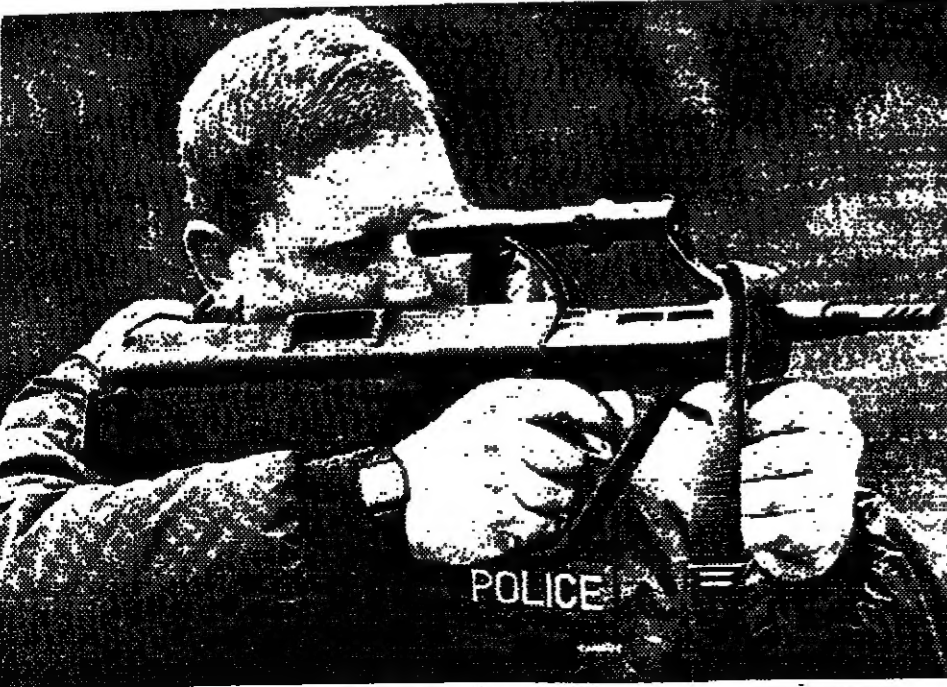
Police firearms experts unveiled a lightweight rifle yesterday, with which they intend to fight armed criminals in the 1990s.

Assistant Chief Constable Hago Pike, of Avon and Somerset police, the first force to issue the gun, said: "It is a fearsome weapon — any criminal looking down the wrong end will realize it's time to call it a day."

Police chiefs throughout Britain are waiting for results from Avon and Somerset, before adopting the sophisticated Steyr siege gun. The short-barrel, 9mm single-shot, semi-automatic rifle, made from the latest plastics and adapted from a battlefield gun, can be carried in one hand.

The rifle is sufficiently accurate and powerful to knock down a man from 100 yards away. Police chiefs believe the lethal Austrian-made weapon, which costs £600 with a telescopic sight, would bring a quick conclusion to any massacre like that in Hungerford in 1987.

Sergeant Bob Moseley, a police firearms expert who demonstrated its capabilities yesterday, said: "It is an excellent weapon which will certainly make a lot of police-



Police Sergeant Bob Moseley puts the lightweight 9mm Steyr carbine rifle through its paces.

men feel safer when they are face-to-face with an armed criminal. It is perfect for use in containing and dealing with sieges and yet it is so small and light I could carry it inside my jacket."

Avon and Somerset police have already taken the weapon

with them on two tense operations involving armed attackers in the past month, although it was not used.

Mr Pike said: "It is the state-of-the-art weapon and I'm sure many police forces will be watching our experience with it. We believe in the

concept of the unarmed policeman but sadly we are facing more and more situations where weapons have to be brought into use for our safety and that of the public."

It bridged the gap between the handgun and the high-velocity long-range rifle.

## Gallery doubles as Sotheby showcase

There was anger in both the art market and the museum world at the announcement yesterday that Manchester City Art Galleries is to be used by Sotheby's as a showcase for a group of 15 Victorian paintings put on sale by the British Rail Pension Fund.

The works include the important painting "Dante in Exile" by Lord Leighton, estimated at £700,000, and "Pandora" by John William Waterhouse at £200,000.

Another highlight is "Atlantia's Race" by Richard Dadd, painted in 1875 while he was in Broadmoor prison for murdering his father. It is estimated at between £100,000 to £150,000. The group is expected to fetch between £1.5 and £2.5 million in total at auction on June 19.

"How dare Manchester be used in that way. People will see the price tags, not the art," one dealer said. "Traditional art galleries have never exhibited anything for the purpose of selling, and they never should do," a museum director said.

However, Mr Richard Gray, the gallery's new director, said: "We have got financial problems in Manchester and I am trying to encourage

people who don't normally use the building to use it more." He said Sotheby's proposed exhibition seemed of high quality and he hoped it would result in financial "spin-offs" for the gallery.

The diamond Marilyn Monroe wore for the promotion of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is an attraction at Christie's New York jewellery sale on April 25. It is estimated at between £100,000 to £150,000. The group is expected to fetch between £1.5 and £2.5 million in total at auction on June 19.

They include a De Havilland Sea Vixen, donated for sale in aid of the BBC Children in Need appeal; a Hawker Fury, forerunner of the Hurricane, which has been rebuilt (estimated to fetch £200,000); an original SE5a, an earlier generation of fighter built in 1922 (estimated at £300,000); and the 1929 Gipsy Moth biplane which appeared in *Out of Africa*.

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Green Paper on probation service proposes radical changes 'to produce results'

# Patten seeks national body with accent on control

By Frances Gibb, Legal Affairs Correspondent

Plans for the first national probation service for England and Wales were outlined in a Green Paper yesterday. It heralds the biggest shake-up in the work and organization of the service since it was founded in 1907.

The Home Office proposals would create a national organization, bringing the locally based 15,000-member service under a central government control and making it more closely accountable.

At the same time there would be a radical shift in the style of work of probation officers. They would be required to take a more rigorous role in supervising sentences imposed by the courts.

The Green Paper also paves the way for contracting out much of the traditional work of the service to voluntary bodies and the private sector.

Such work might include running of bail hostels, conciliation work in the civil courts, working with prisoners before and after release or the running of community service schemes.

Probation officers would, in effect, become managers of a range of services, contracting out and "purchasing" others where to do so was more cost-

effective than running them themselves. The reform is aimed at ensuring the probation service implements the Government's new criminal justice strategy, unveiled in the White Paper last week.

Mr John Patten, Minister of State for Home Affairs, said yesterday: "If the White Paper proposals go through, we will see more people being punished in the community and when they do come out, being supervised at a greater level of intensity."

The role of the probation service, in carrying out those functions was therefore critical, he said. "It is essential the probation service should be reorganized so that it delivers what the White Paper requires of it."

The probation service, which costs £241 million, will get an extra £20 million to carry out the task. In return, it is expected to "produce results".

Mr Patten emphasized there were no plans to dismantle the service. Since 1907, it had grown "like Topsy" and was envisaged to continue to grow substantially in the 1990s.

"What we need is a new model, a thoroughly modern probation officer for the 1990s, who will still be mixing

care and control, but with far more control being exercised than now."

Mr Patten rejected the notion that some probation officers would be unwilling, or even unable, to take on that new role geared to supervising penalties and to management.

"They will see this as an enormous opportunity to move centre stage, to grow in numbers and become more important to the criminal justice system. I do not believe they will turn down that chance."

The Green Paper central proposal for a new national probation service could be done in two ways, it says: either by creating a national probation service within the Home Office, with a director general answerable to the



Mr Patten: "An opportunity to move centre stage."

Home Secretary; or to establish an executive agency, as has been proposed for the running of the magistrates' courts. The present local structure is a product of history, it says. A national

service would ensure a more direct and flexible funding system; be more accountable and achieve greater consistency of standards.

At the same time, the present funding system in which the Government pays 80 per cent of the funds through local authorities, might be replaced with 100 per cent central government funding, subject to cash limits. That might be paid direct to probation committees.

Mr Patten said that until monitoring was recently introduced, there were widely varying practices between different probation areas, which had led to charges of the service being a "soft touch" in parts of the country.

In some areas, it had been as long as six weeks after a court had imposed a community

service order before the offender started work, which blunted the impact of the penalty.

On contracting out services, which will be the subject of a separate paper to be issued shortly, the Green Paper highlights six areas where that could be done: cautioning and charging policies; bail hostels - in Mr Patten's words - "running a supervised hotel service"; supervision programmes; work with prisoners; work with victims and work in the civil courts.

The independent sector of voluntary and private-sector bodies should be more involved in work with offenders in the community, it says.

There is a core of probation work that should always be done by professionally quali-

fied officers. But there is other work where "if the independent sector can provide the necessary services at a competitive price, there is a clear case for probation areas to purchase the services in question, rather than provide them in-house".

Some of the work might be contracted out directly by the Government, either nationally or locally.

"If there was evidence of poor-quality schemes being run by a probation service then the Government might contract with an organization to provide community service schemes in a particular area and that organization would be the designated provider."

The White Paper last week proposed that electronic monitoring, "tagging", could be done by a separate organization from the probation service. Other examples are the community service schemes, probation centres, or help and advice to prisoners.

Any private or voluntary body contracted to provide a service would be subject to new national standards proposed in the recent White Paper for supervising offenders and service to the courts. Such contracting out would be subject to national standards.

Under the proposed reor-

ganization, the Green Paper suggests merging smaller probation areas to provide stronger management. The existing probation committees could be reduced to make them more like boards of management.

At the same time, to improve links with the judiciary, probation committees could be required to have a circuit judge as a member. Alternatively, a nominated judge might be given oversight of different aspects of probation service.

The proposals would be backed by tougher powers for the Home Secretary and the Inspectorate of Probation, the Green Paper recommends.

If committees failed to ensure services were up to standard, or even refused to carry out supervision as required, the Home Secretary could declare a committee to be in "default" and appoint new members.

There is also "a clear case" for putting the Inspectorate on a statutory footing to strengthen its role and make clear that its main duty is to inspect the probation services and report back.

*Supervision and Punishment in the Community: A Framework for Action* (Command Paper No 996, Stationery Office, £6.20)

## Main options for centrally run system

The main proposals in the Green Paper, on which comments are invited by June 30, are:

- A new, national centrally run probation service for England and Wales with 100 per cent central government funding;
- A new role for probation officers, with more emphasis on supervision and management of services;
- Contracting out of work to private

sector or voluntary agencies, such as running of bail hostels and work with prisoners;

- Probation committees to operate more as management boards;
- HM Inspectorate to be put on statutory footing;
- Greater Home Office control over senior probation appointments;
- Better links between the probation

committees and the judiciary;

- New default powers for the Home Secretary to replace a probation committee which does not discharge its statutory duty;
- Abolition of the requirement that probation officers must have social work qualification; and
- Merging of the smaller of the 56 probation areas.

## Transport policy

# National Trust fights road-building plans

By Michael McCarthy, Environment Correspondent

The National Trust, which last year reached a record membership of 1,860,000, is to oppose the Government's £12 billion road-building programme.

It will make its position clear in its submission to the forthcoming environment White Paper, invited by Mr Chris Patten, the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The trust's opposition represents an unprecedented flexing of political muscle, as the membership is largely made up of natural Conservative voters and far exceeds that of any trade union.

The decision was announced yesterday by Dame Jennifer Jenkins, the trust's

chairman, and Mr Angus Stirling, its director-general, at the launch of its annual report for 1989.

Dame Jennifer said its submission to Mr Patten would comment on transport and road-building policies. "We shall be drawing attention to the threats posed by new road-building schemes to important archaeological sites, landscapes and gardens," she said.

New roads, she said, now constituted the biggest threat to the trust, in particular "a combination of prospective trunk roads going in all directions accompanied by a number of small bypasses".

The Government set out its huge roads programme last

May in the *Roads for Prosperity* transport White Paper. It announced that 2,700 miles of new or widened roads would be added over the next 10 years and spending would be doubled to £12 billion.

The proposals have been attacked by several environmental pressure groups, but the trust's opposition is likely to be more unwelcome to Mr Cecil Parkinson, the Secretary of State for Transport.

It is, however, likely to help Mr Patten in the forthcoming Cabinet battle to make transport policy an acceptable element of the environment White Paper, due to be published in September.

Dame Jennifer and Mr Stirling particularly criticized the Government's decision, announced in December, to drive a four-lane dual carriageway through the downland on top of the White Cliffs of Dover.

The significance of the trust's opposition to transport policy was underlined by the annual report's membership and income figures.

The National Trust received 338,000 new members in 1989; that increase is more than the membership of any other conservation group in Britain apart from the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Its income was £90 million.

The membership of 1,860,000, which is thought will grow to more than two million in 1990, makes the trust the largest conservation organization in the world. Britain's largest trade union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, has 1,300,000 members.

graphs (which are non-returnable) will help, and a daytime telephone number for the people nominated is essential.

- An account of a conservation scheme typical of last year's entries - featuring efforts to save a badger family threatened by the building of a new road - can be heard on PM on Radio Four on Monday evening, from 5pm.

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ENVIRONMENT AWARD

## Post nominations early for conservation prize

Entries have begun to arrive for the 1990 Environment Award sponsored by The Times and BBC Radio Four's evening news programme PM, which will provide £5,000 for the best contribution to the improvement of the environment by an individual or group in Britain (Our Environment Correspondent writes).

Last year a considerable number of entries were disqualified by late arrival, so people entering are advised to post early. The closing date is March 9.

Nominations, which should be of not more than 250 words, typewritten if possible, should be sent to: The Times/PM Environment Award, PO Box 486, 1, Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. People may nominate themselves. Photographs (which are non-returnable) will help, and a daytime telephone number for the people nominated is essential.

• An account of a conservation scheme typical of last year's entries - featuring efforts to save a badger family threatened by the building of a new road - can be heard on PM on Radio Four on Monday evening, from 5pm.

## Courts in dock for squalor

By Our Legal Affairs Correspondent

London's magistrates' courts are dirty, crowded, have almost no refreshment facilities and, at best, basic toilets, a survey published today in the *New Law Journal* shows.

In most cases, prosecution and defence witnesses share the same waiting area and can overhear each other's conversations. The survey concludes that there has been little change since a similar survey 21 years ago.

"Most of the courts are housed in old, intimidating buildings which are difficult to keep clean," it says. "At best, toilets are basic, refreshment facilities are practically non-existent and most courts have signs up banning food and drink from the premises."

Marlborough Street has no public toilets; at Bow Street they are "very basic" with "filthy towels"; at Greenwich, 10 cells share one sink and toilet and conversation takes place

through grilles; Highbury Corner smells of urine; and at Marylebone, prisoners in custody are held in cells with iron bars.

At Old Street facilities are significantly worse than 21 years ago. There are no interview rooms; toilets are filthy with no paper and the ladies' is down a perilous flight of stairs; general hygiene is low and cells are abysmal.

The only court which comes out well is Thames; the new court in Bow Road, the survey says, is "a breath of fresh air", with bright clean toilets and four interview rooms.

The survey concludes that if this is a sign of things to come, it is "good news". But it warns: "It may go the way of Camberwell, where there were plans for six advocates' phones and four consultation rooms," but there are neither rooms nor phones.

with verbal warnings at speeds of up to 85mph on motorways, providing they were driving safely.

Mr Peter Joslin, chairman of the association's traffic committee and chief constable of the Warwickshire force, defended its stance yesterday, saying it was "sensible policing" at a time when many drivers were exceeding speed limits on motorways.

The speed limit introduced in the 1960s needed to be updated to take account of the better roads and safer cars today. Raising the limit could also help avoid "bunching" of cars, which often leads to crashes.

Referring to Mr Hosking's comments, Mr Joslin said: "I resent the way this criticism is put. Having a speed limit which people disregard is

## Baby of eight months gets first cuddle



Eight months after he was born Edward Azzopardi is still waiting for his first kiss from his mother, but yesterday he got a cuddle from his father. For until now, a cuddle or kiss could have killed him: he was born with a rare illness of the

immune system that made him vulnerable to the slightest infection. However, pioneering work by Dr Graham Watson at Newcastle upon Tyne General Hospital means that Edward can leave hospital and fly home to his mother in

Malta. He received a bone marrow transplant from his father Joe, aged 34. Dr Watson did not live to see the success of his work; he died in a climbing accident last year. Mr Azzopardi said last night: "I owe my son's life to him."

## Furniture industry told to do better

By Michael Horsnell

A warning that the £5 billion a year furniture and carpet industries should give customers a better deal or face legal curbs was given yesterday by the Office of Fair Trading.

The Government's consumer watchdog said half the furniture and carpets bought in Britain gave problems, particularly over quality, delivery delays, lack of information and lack of schemes to protect pre-delivery deposits.

Sir Gordon Borrie, QC, Director-General of Fair Trading, said he had given leading retailers and manufacturers six months to act on the OFT report. He ordered the report after a 1986 survey showed that only cars and household appliances attracted more complaints than furniture and carpets.

Sir Gordon said: "It is still a depressing picture. Quite frankly, it is just not good enough. I will expect to find signs of positive progress."

A survey of almost 1,000

people found there had been problems with 69 per cent of self-assembly furniture bought in the past 12 months, together with 59 per cent of upholstered furniture, 57 per cent of carpets, 51 per cent of cabinets and 45 per cent of beds.

Upholstered furniture topped the list of complaints with quality problems in a third of all purchases within five years. Early signs of wear caused most difficulties. The most common problem with carpets was the fitting, but there were also complaints about

uneven colouring. A code of practice for the furniture trade, introduced in 1978 by the National Association of Retail Furnituremen, was not being obeyed by many shops, the report said.

It went on: "If the industry can, or will not, improve the situation of its own volition, the Office of Fair Trading will have no option but to consider whether legislation is appropriate."

The lack of a deposit protection scheme - "despite repeated requests from the Office" - was singled out for special criticism.

The OFT has been told that such a scheme would be impractical because of the prohibitive cost of operating it, but refuses to accept this and urges the associations to re-examine the matter.

On the industry-wide problem of delivery delays, the report said that while individual makers could help counter problems, "retailers are not totally without blame in raising consumers' expectations".

Both manufacturers and retailers often provided little information to buyers and, in some cases, makers' details were removed by the shops.

The report added that shoppers were not always blameless. Some were told a piece of furniture was not suitable for them, but went ahead and bought it - only to complain later.

*Furniture and Carpets* (Director General of Fair Trading, Chancery House, Chancery Lane, London WC2A 9SP; no charge)

## Domestic staff at 3 hospitals lose jobs

More than 100 domestic staff at three hospitals in Nottinghamshire are to lose their jobs because their work is to be put out to tender.

The announcement by the Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority will affect 104 workers at the Victoria and Forest hospitals, Mansfield, and Newstead hospital, Ravenshead.

Mr Paul Bowskill, the Nuge area secretary, said the union would try to persuade the health authority to change its mind but he thought the request stood only a slim chance. The contract had been awarded to Mediguard and there are to be discussions to see if staff can be offered jobs.

## Raid hostages

A policeman and two members of the public were taken hostage after a raid on a mail sorting office in Clitheroe, Lancashire, yesterday. The two raiders were caught after a chase on the M65 and their hostages released.

## Assault charge

Four officers from Armley prison, Leeds, appeared in court yesterday accused of assaulting inmates and perverting the course of justice. They were granted unconditional bail until April 2.

## Welsh orders

A Welsh trade mission to Saudi Arabia led by Mr Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Wales, has secured orders worth £7 million.

## Wool record

Export earnings of the Yorkshire-based wool textile industry totalled a record £673 million last year, almost 10 per cent higher than the previous best in 1988.

## Salmon stock

More than 6,000 young salmon are to be introduced into the Torridge in north Devon to replace stocks killed by pollution.

## Two remanded

Liam O'Duibhir, aged 28, of Dublin, and Damien McComb, 22, of Belfast, charged with conspiracy to cause an explosion, were further remanded in custody until March 1 at Lambeth Magistrates' Court yesterday.

## Sent for trial

John Keith Jones, aged 29, of Llandudno, Gwynedd, was sent for Crown Court trial yesterday accused of the murder of his father, Ivor, aged 68, a retired telecom engineer, and mother, Rowenna.

## Police failure to enforce speed limits 'is flouting law'

By Kevin Eason, Motoring Correspondent

Mr John Hosking, the chairman of the Magistrates' Association, has accused the police of "bringing the law into disrepute" over their failure to crack down on speeding motorists.

Mr Hosking criticised a police recommendation that the motorway speed limit should be raised from 70mph to 80mph, and that motorists driving at up to 85mph should not be prosecuted but given verbal warnings.

He said: "We are amazed at the survey of the police in proposing this, and we were flabbergasted when they let it be known that they would be unlikely to prosecute a motorist for driving below 85mph on the motorway."

"It brings the law into disrepute. We do not agree with them about increasing the speed limit to 80mph

anyway. Human nature being what it is, everybody would then do 95."

Mr Hosking, whose organization represents 26,000 lay magistrates in England and Wales, made his comments in an interview with the magazine *Autocar & Motor*. However, the police diverge from the courts in their attitude to speeding offences.

The police have been finding it more difficult to cope with the numbers of motorists driving at over the legal limits. There were more than 170,000 prosecutions for speeding in 1987, the last year for which there are records, and 284,000 fixed penalty notices were issued.

The Association of Chief Police Officers issued guidelines to forces saying that motorists should be let off

with verbal warnings at speeds of up to 85mph on motorways, providing they were driving safely.

Mr Peter Joslin, chairman of the association's traffic committee and chief constable of the Warwickshire force, defended its stance yesterday, saying it was "sensible policing" at a time when many drivers were exceeding speed limits on motorways.

The speed limit introduced in the 1960s needed to be updated to take account of the better roads and safer cars today. Raising the limit could also help avoid "bunching" of cars, which often leads to crashes.

Referring to Mr Hosking's comments, Mr Joslin said: "I resent the way this criticism is put. Having a speed limit which people disregard is

bringing a law into disrepute. What we are trying to do is to deal with the realities of how drivers behave."

"The degree of prosecutions shows that the police are not disregarding speeding as an offence, but we have to take a realistic approach."

• A survey of 800 policyholders for the Insurance Service, one of Britain's leading motor insurers, shows that 64 per cent would prefer government investment in better public transport rather than new roads.

Mr Richard Hill, the company's managing director, said: "The message from motorists is loud and clear: encouraging people back on to public transport is more important than encouraging more cars on to the roads by extending the network."



Mr Hosking: Deplores police clemency towards speeding.

## More cars sold abroad as home sales falter

Production of cars for export rose by more than 25 per cent last month as manufacturers directed efforts away from the faltering home market beset by high interest rates (Our Motoring Correspondent writes).

Provisional figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders yesterday showed that production of cars in British factories reflected the depressed home market, falling back 4.8 per cent over January last year, from 110,900 to 105,610.

That masked a surge of export orders though, with

production of cars destined for sale overseas rising 25.6 per cent, from just over 23,000 to 29,008. Commercial vehicle production also fell, from 28,202 to 21,859, a drop of 22.5 per cent. Output for export increased by 3 per cent, from 7,029 to 7,240.

Mr Simon Foster, the director of the SMM&T, said: "The significant rise in production for export is most gratifying and demonstrates the important role which the British motor industry will play during the next decade in overcoming the nation's balance of payments problems."



## COMMUNISM IN CRISIS

# East Germany hits back at pressure for monetary union

From Anne McElvoy, East Berlin, and Ian Murray, Bonn

The East German Government yesterday accused Bonn of trying to destabilize the country to force an early currency union, and called on its citizens not to heed rumours "spread from other capitals" that its currency was near collapse.

At the same time Herr Helmut Kohl, the West German Chancellor, told a rowdy session of the Bundestag that "unity as soon as possible" must be the goal of the new, democratically elected East German Government after the election set for March 18.

He taunted the opposition Social Democrats (SPD), as he reported on the state of the reunification talks, for being over-familiar with the disgraced regime of Herr Erich Honecker, and confidently spelt out the programme he has drawn up which could reunite Germany by the end of the year.

East Berlin's allegations of destabilization were made by Herr Wolfgang Meyer, the government spokesman, after a meeting of the Cabinet on the unsuccessful appeal by Herr Hans Modrow, the Prime Minister, for financial aid. Herr Meyer said Bonn had shown "no willingness" to help East Germany "in spite of its stated awareness of the need for immediate stabilizing measures".

The Government repeated that it did not consider speedy currency union as proposed by Bonn to be a fitting short-term solution to spiralling economic problems and insisted that this would result in further instability.

Most East Germans, however, feel that things could be scarcely more unstable. Lack of confidence in the mark has led to a wave of withdrawals from banks and people changing their savings into Western currency on the black market at rates of up to nine marks to one Deutschmark. Queues formed early yesterday with new intensity outside the state banks of East Berlin.

Herr Meyer called on East Germans not to heed the words of "panic mongers who dramatize and exaggerate the

situation," a clear reference to Bonn economists.

The Government, unsure of how to deal with the crisis of confidence, has promised that talks will begin next week on a timetable for currency union and that savings will be protected when this happens. It also announced yesterday that a reform of the moribund banking system was under discussion.

In the Bundestag debate, Herr Kohl rubbed home the message that his tough line with East German communists had succeeded where the "softly-softly" approach of

the Social Democrats had failed.

Herr Hans-Jochen Vogel, the SPD leader, confined his main attacks to the Chancellor's refusal before reunification to guarantee Poland's western border. He also was for unity and against neutrality — the main plank of Herr Kohl's platform.

The Chancellor paid tribute to President Gorbachev, whom he said had opened the door to German unity at their meeting in Moscow last weekend. Herr Kohl also thanked the Western allies for standing firmly behind West Germany during the Cold War. West Germany would not fail NATO now, he promised. A united Germany would not become neutral or demilitarized, although it would respect the Soviet Union's legitimate security

interests by not having troops stationed on territories which were once behind the Iron Curtain.

As what he called "a symbol of the growing trust between the two countries", the Chancellor announced that Mr Gorbachev last weekend had not only accepted the right of Germans to unite but had agreed that a West German had been invited to join a Soviet space flight next year.

Herr Kohl sought to quieten fears that monetary union would create mass unemployment, send inflation soaring, slash pensions and drain savings in East Germany.

"No pensioner, no invalid, no unemployed person, no war victim, no social security case needs to fear a cut in benefits," he promised.

After his statement, the Chancellor set off to report on developments to President Mitterrand of France as part of his commitment to keep all of the four victorious Second World War allies informed of what was happening.

Herr Vogel called for the dismissal of Herr Horst Telschick, the Chancellor's Minister, who last week claimed that East Germany was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Herr Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the Foreign Minister and hero of the hour, was applauded as the author of the "two plus four" formula by which both the Germans will negotiate unification terms with the four allied powers. He was congratulated for having succeeded in Downing Street the previous day in winning approval for German unity from Mrs Thatcher.

Herr Genscher, trying to move the debate forward to disarmament policy, told the Bundestag that now the Berlin Wall had fallen, the wall of rockets across Europe must also come down.

Law eased: The East German assembly law forbidding the formation of associations not approved by the authorities is to be abolished, the Government said yesterday.

ment of their destiny... but whatever form it takes, France also has a direct interest in the consequences."

Yesterday, M Pierre Bérégovoy, the Finance Minister, was calling urgently for a summit of EC heads of state to examine the more immediate repercussions of the unification process. While European economies in general, and that of France in particular, stood to gain, he said, the Germans would be obliged to stand by existing obligations to both the Community and Eastern Europe.

In similar vein, M Roland Dumas, the veteran Foreign Minister, has regretted the passing of a 40-year era of "relative comfort" under the existing order.

The question now is, can Franco-German relations ever be the same again?

There is acute awareness in government circles here about the risk of being seen to stand aside from, let alone obstruct, progress towards German unity.

In today's passionate circumstances, years of official support from the West for just such an objective cannot easily be discarded as no more than political posturing.

ing. At the entrance a hand-drawn poster protests forlornly against the inevitable: "For Sale, one large piece of land, comfortably situated in the heart of Europe, 18 million inhabitants going cheap."

Another mocks the pre-unity chanting of the Leipzig demonstrations, calling for Budapest (Reuters) — Hungarians in the eastern industrial town of Leninvaros pushed and spat at the country's former communist leader, Mr Károlyi Gress, when he tried to take part in a televised debate on local economic problems.

"GDR One Fatherland". The organizers, the *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, have evidently had difficulty finding Eastern bloc participants still prepared to be described as socialists to take part, with not a single non-German representative of *Mittel Europa* attending. The embarrassing gap has been

filled by little known British and Irish rock groups who, as one wag in the audience remarked, can still talk about socialism with relish, not having lived through it.

A West German performer takes the stage in a large hall named after a 1950s communist audience only dimly remembers, and remarks that he is pleased to get there before it is renamed the Helmut Kohl Hall. The laughter is tinged with bitterness.

"Helmut the Unifier" is the uncontented villain of the East German left and gradually perceived with some apprehension by wider sections of the population who have realized that their fate is being determined by the headline between Bonn and Moscow, with East Berlin informed afterwards as a mere courtesy.

The taxi driver outside listens to a radio report saying that unity will come within the year, and comments that it is

## Dushanbe protesters call for leaders to quit



Tajikistan protesters confronting soldiers in Dushanbe, the capital, yesterday. Tass said about 8,000 demonstrators rallied outside the city's Communist Party Central Committee headquarters, calling for the local government's resignation (AP reports from Moscow). The three

leading officials — the Communist Party First Secretary, the Prime Minister and the President — have said they intend to resign.

East Mr Boris Puga, a Soviet Politburo member, explained on local television that the resignations could not be accepted for the time being. It

would be up to a plenary meeting of the Central Committee, which was meeting yesterday, to decide whether to accept the resignations.

Press reports said extremists had shot at the security forces on Wednesday, the first time they had mentioned use of firearms by the crowd. The

government newspaper *Izvestia* said that on Wednesday pogroms, rapes and looting and mass disorder continued. Tass said some 5,000 men from the Army, Interior Ministry troops and volunteer self-defence forces were guarding official buildings and patrolling Dushanbe.

### Sparring in the Central Committee

## Old Kremlin rivals get back in the ring

From Mary Dejevsky, Moscow

Two old adversaries found themselves sparring again at last week's Central Committee meeting. Mr Yegor Ligachov, for the old-style Bolsheviks, was — in the Soviet Union's misleading political geography — in the right-hand corner, and Mr Boris Yeltsin, for the radicals, was in the far left.

Unlike the closing day of the special party conference 18 months ago, there was no spectacular confrontation between them, but the strength of their characters showed in their speeches, once again defining the opposite poles of the Soviet Communist Party.

The appeal of Mr Yeltsin can be readily understood. He speaks language that everyone can understand, without communist jargon; his preoccupations coincide with those of many people across the Soviet Union. He calls for an end to the material benefits enjoyed by the party apparatus, an end to corruption, freedom for all varieties of economic activity and for a genuinely competitive multi-party system.

Even Mr Yeltsin's weaknesses — his readiness to pronounce on anything and everything without further thought, his utter frankness, his "difficult character" and his intransigence — endear him to people for whom compromise in the cause of family and personal survival has become a way of life.

Even reports of his being found wet and worse for wear after falling or being pushed

into a Moscow river near the leaders' estate did him no political harm. Believers of these reports tended to think they made him that bit more human, others dismissed them as a deliberate attempt to discredit him.

Mr Ligachov is less easy to comprehend. His unpopularity, at least in Moscow, runs deep. In the Communist Party and Soviet power centres, however, it is another story.

Even in the recently established Congress of People's

in the sense that he wants the party to preserve what he sees as its traditional — original — values and strengths. He is right to maintain that many of these are undermined by *perestroika*.

He stands for collective discipline over individual views, for acknowledging the all-seeing wisdom of the party, for the historical inevitability of the communist idea and the rightness of the first Bolsheviks. Arguably, he represents an image of Bolshevism

It is wrong to describe Ligachov as Stalinist. He detests Stalinism as strongly as Yeltsin, having lost relatives in Stalin's camps



Deputies — the two-thirds-elected body that nevertheless contains many party members — his speeches attract more applause than anyone else's. Like Mr Yeltsin, he is an accomplished orator, like him he speaks plainly.

But whereas Mr Yeltsin's freedom of speech comes of being an outsider, beholden to no one, Mr Ligachov's stems from his total commitment to a universal set of ideas. Mr Ligachov is a "conservative"

that never corresponded to reality. Were the first Bolsheviks really as committed to collective and party discipline as Mr Ligachov and others of like mind believe; were they incorruptible and as ascetic as mythology suggests?

The mythology, with its indestructible hope of a bright future and equality in prosperity for all, is what supports Mr Ligachov, and he is entirely logical in arguing that, if party discipline were fully upheld

and if the party enforced its "leading role" in society, many manifestations of what seem to him "anarchy" — in the Baltic states, in the Transcaucasus, in city crime — might not have become so widespread.

Little is known of his private life, but he appears to be a disciplinarian of the first order. There is no evidence that he would refuse to subordinate himself to a party decision he disagreed with (hence his express support for Mr Gorbachev's leadership at last week's plenum), and it is improbable, despite the allegation against him last year, that he ever accepted a bribe.

Even his enemies do not suggest that it was to avoid being brought to justice that he insisted on being investigated — as is his right — by a commission of the Central Committee instead of by civilian prosecutors. As a member of the Central Committee and a disciplinarian, he would accept only the judgement of his peers.

It is wrong to describe Mr Ligachov and his ideas as Stalinist. He detests Stalinism as strongly as Mr Yeltsin. He told the party conference in 1988 that he had lost relatives in Stalin's camps, as did so many others.

But while Mr Yeltsin and others would dismiss all Stalin's works as an evil deformation of Marxism-Leninism (and some party members would say the rot set

in even under Lenin), Mr Ligachov would summarize Stalin's rule under the headings of good and bad points: the good points being discipline, strong leadership, victory over Germany, and rapid industrialization.

Many, including Mr Yeltsin, would say that one-man rule, strong discipline and the supremacy of the collective are the vices that brought the country to its present pass. Mr Ligachov would disagree. For him, these features would, properly applied, have set the Soviet Union on the path to "real" communism.

People of many persuasions gather under Mr Ligachov's banner, among them Russian nationalists who see in "internationalism" an antidote to the nationalisms they oppose, party and government apparatchiks who fear for their power and privileges under *perestroika*, and neo-Stalinists who want to enforce discipline if necessary by inhumane methods. There is no evidence that Mr Ligachov supports any of these groups.

It may be his misfortune that the undoubted political strength he possesses inside the party depends less on his appeal to the Utopian elements of Marxism-Leninism — the desire to end exploitation and work with, rather than against, the historical process — than on the way his idealism can be harnessed to other sectional and far less noble ends.

## Ligachov vows to fight plan for private hired labour

Continued from page 1

which combined planning and market forces. "The plan should determine strategy, and market relations should resolve questions related to supply and demand," he said.

Asked about the prospect of German unity, he said the German people had the right "to arrange their lives as they think fit", but added: "In my opinion, we are not talking about reunification so much as East Germany being swallowed up by West Germany."

He called on all democratic nations

to act collectively to ensure that German reunification took place in such a way that Germany would never again pose a threat to its neighbours.

"I know the deprivations endured by the British during the war. They are very well aware that it was from that land, that German land, that two world wars have come, and who better than we British and Soviet people to know the grief and suffering this caused?"

Mr Ligachov insisted that he fully supported the last week's Central Committee decision to end the Com-

munist monopoly of power. "I have come to the conclusion... that if the party wishes to keep its role as a ruling party... it must try to achieve this by political means," he said. "This is a matter of principle... we are for a multi-party system."

Nevertheless, "in the present conditions", he thought the Communists "should be the only party", as it was the only political force which could provide stability.

● MOSCOW: In the latest separatist challenge to the Kremlin from the restive Baltic republics, the par-

liament of Soviet Latvia voted after heated debate yesterday to work for full Latvian independence (Reuters reports).

There were 177 votes for and only 48 against a declaration which said: "It is necessary to do all to restore the state independence of Latvia and transform it into a free, independent Latvian state."

The declaration denounced a 1940 parliamentary solution that brought the republic into the Soviet Union, saying it could not serve as a basis for the future.

## Revolutionary rock nears finale

From Anne McElvoy, East Berlin

East Germany may be destined for currency union and unification faster than it can re-learn the words of its belatedly reinstated national anthem, but to wander through the House of Young Talent in East Berlin this week, you wouldn't know it.

The city's annual agitprop spree, the festival of Red Song, now in its 20th and probably last year of rocking for revolution, is continuing doggedly with a distinct feeling of *après nous le déluge* hanging over the two-million-mark music spectacle.

The House remains the haunt of the young trends of East Berlin who gather in their Hungarian jeans and leather jackets donated by Western cousins to hear a Cuban band performing a cheery number entitled *Marxist-Leninism or Death*.

The beer is cheap and the walls decorated with photographs of the November upris-

ing. At the entrance a hand-drawn poster protests forlornly against the inevitable: "For Sale, one large piece of land, comfortably situated in the heart of Europe, 18 million inhabitants going cheap."

Another mocks the pre-unity chanting of the Leipzig demonstrations, calling for Budapest (Reuters) — Hungarians in the eastern industrial town of Leninvaros pushed and spat at the country's former communist leader, Mr Károlyi Gress, when he tried to take part in a televised debate on local economic problems.

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all too fast for his liking. He is worried about the effects of monetary union on his savings.

East Germany is disappearing by the week, even before the first confederative treaty is on the table, because people believe it is and act accordingly. New correspondents now choose signs which read "Berlin Office" rather than mentioning East Germany, on the logic that they will only have to change them again by the end of the year.

Meanwhile, the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* is in shreds, with membership plummeting and factories ordered not to produce any more bright blue-and-yellow shirts for its uniform. It is also casting around for buyers to relieve it of the House of Young Talent and the festival it can no longer afford. The only offer forthcoming so far is from a West German chain of butchers.

## Crowds back Romanian mutiny

From Christopher Walker, Bucharest

Thousands of angry Romanian workers and students yesterday rallied to the support of the armed forces' mutiny and began converging on the Government's headquarters in Victory Square, demanding the sack of General Nicolae Militaru, the veteran Defence Minister, a former close associate of Nicolae Ceausescu.

A delegation of 35 middle-ranking officers who entered the building on Monday refused to leave as they pressed for the implementation of a list of 13 sweeping demands, including the removal of General Militaru, aged 65, and of General Mihail Ghita, the despised Interior Minister, said to have been implicated in the killing of unarmed demonstrators in December.

The defiant military officers have rejected a compromise offer by the provisional Government designed to end their mutinous protest in support of a purge of former Com-

munist monopoly of power. "I have come to the conclusion... that if the party wishes to keep its role as a ruling party... it must try to achieve this by political means," he said. "This is a matter of principle... we are for a multi-party system."

Nevertheless, "in the present conditions", he thought the Communists "should be the only party", as it was the only political force which could provide stability.

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The declaration denounced a 1940 parliamentary solution that brought the republic into the Soviet Union, saying it could not serve as a basis for the future.

Mr Petre Roman, the Prime Minister, offered a series of concessions which fell far short of the sacking of the generals. His offer was treated derisively by the officers inside the besieged building, who have been backed by upwards of 1,000 demonstrators on open ground outside.

Urgent government moves were under way to try to find a solution before the weekend, when another mass demonstration is planned at the former headquarters of the secret police. Political sources

said that senior figures, such as Mr Roman and the interim President, Mr Ion Iliescu, both former party members, feared their own jobs could be at stake if they bowed to popular pressure to remove the Communist generals.

Observers expressed fears of renewed fighting between the former Securitate members and the disaffected officers, including those up to the rank of colonel.

The Romanian media, still responsive to central control despite being freed of some of Ceausescu's restrictions, attempted to play down the crisis but thousands of leaflets calling on citizens to join the protest were being distributed throughout the capital and posted on walls — reflecting the degree of organization of the anti-Front movement.

Romanian officials said that other demonstrations were taking place in Timisoara, the crucible of the revolution.

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# Secret Hong Kong deal by UK and China denounced

From Jonathan Brande, Hong Kong, and Catherine Sampson, Peking

Hong Kong politicians have denounced a secret deal between Britain and China on the territory's future constitution. The deal, which will be put to the vote in Peking today, among representatives from Hong Kong and China who are preparing the colony's post-1997 constitution, limits the number of directly elected seats in the first 60-seat legislature to 20, rising to 24 in 1999 and 30 in 2003.

Although China has claimed this is a concession to Britain, it is only a minor improvement on the earlier Chinese proposal for 18 directly elected seats in 1997. Hong Kong's existing Legislative Council has been pressing for a fully elected legislature by 2003.

The liberal leader, Mr Martin Lee, QC, who was expelled from the Basic Law Drafting Committee last year for his criticism of Peking's June 4 crackdown in Tiananmen Square, called Britain's acquiescence to Peking's plans, which effectively limit democratic development before and after the territory reverts to Chinese rule in 1997, a "shameless act of surrender" which would only encourage China to break yet more promises in the future.

He said he believed the agreement was a clear breach of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on the future of Hong Kong, which says the legislature will ultimately be directly elected.

He said the British Government had "taken the Joint Declaration and agreed to rub

out its central promises, with China leading Britain by the nose to what the Chinese euphemistically describe as convergence."

A fellow liberal and pro-democracy activist, Mr Yung Sum, said the agreement took no account of the wishes of the people and Government of Hong Kong.

The drafting committee is made up of Hong Kong and Chinese representatives, but China holds the majority. Hong Kong representatives now say there is little likelihood of wresting further concessions from Peking.

Mr Rayson Huang, who led a rebel grouping of 11 out of the 18-strong Hong Kong team in a drive for faster democratization, spoke of his dissatisfaction with the drafting committee's decision, but said, "I'm resigned to this rate of development." Hong Kong's views had "by no means" been taken into account.

Another Basic Law drafter, Miss Maria Tam, who is seen as a moderate, agreed, saying the deal would satisfy no-one in Hong Kong. Mr Raymond Wu, a conservative member of the committee, said, however, that it was a step in the right direction.

For his part, Sir David Wilson, the Governor of Hong Kong, has said that Britain might increase the pace of democratic reform in the run-up to 1997 if the outcome of the Basic Law drafting process failed to satisfy people in Hong Kong.

In a statement that appeared to imply that the

agreement reached between Britain and China was binding only for the first direct elections, he said further improvements might be discussed later.

As a result of this week's negotiations, Sino-British relations are expected to ease considerably, but Britain may face increasingly fierce protests in Hong Kong. Britain is expected to hail the negotiations as something of a victory, praising the few amendments the Chinese have made as valuable concessions.

The Hong Kong representatives also succeeded in limiting the dual voting system to private members' Bills. The system is widely seen in Hong Kong as a mainland tactic to delay and obstruct legislation supported by directly-elected representatives.

Mr Allen Lee, the leader of the Legislative Council, meanwhile, strongly criticized another element of the secret deal, which raises the maximum number of foreign passport-holders from 15 per cent to 20 per cent of the post-1997 legislature.

He said any such limit was wrong in principle and would be unworkable.

In London the Foreign Office yesterday declined to comment on reports from Peking that Britain has agreed to Chinese plans for limited democratization in Hong Kong after 1997.

A spokesman said there would be no statement until the talks end, and this is not expected before midday London time tomorrow.

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## Anguish of air crash vigil



A crying boy among anxious relatives of passengers from the ill-fated Indian Airlines Airbus crash near Bangalore, in which 92 people died, waiting for news of survivors at Santa Cruz airport in Bombay. Doctors and relatives of the victims struggled to identify the bodies, many charred beyond recognition (Reporter's photo). At least 54 people, including three infants, survived when the two-month-old Airbus A320 crashed moments before landing.

The bodies of victims have been kept in the open at Victoria Hospital, Bangalore, where more than 200 men, women and children waited to identify relatives. Mr Ashok Birla, a member of a wealthy Indian family, his wife and daughter were among those killed, airline officials said. Their bodies have yet to be identified. Indian Airlines sources said they were waiting for a team of experts from Airbus Industries in France before starting an inquiry.

## Bush takes his drug crusade to Andean leaders

From Geoffrey Matthews, Cartagena, Colombia

President Bush arrived in the Caribbean city of Cartagena yesterday for a summit to plot strategy for what he has dubbed the Third World War against drugs.

With him came Mr James Baker, Secretary of State, Mr William Bennett, his drugs czar, and a force of aides and secret servicemen. He is to discuss ways to defeat the enemy of cocaine with the leaders of the three Andean nations unhappily caught up in its production: Presidents Barco of Colombia, Garcia of Peru and Paz Zamora of Bolivia.

Cartagena was the Spanish empire's beachhead on the South American continent. Founded in 1533 and built like a fortress, it received gold and other treasure which it stored for shipment back to the old world on galleons.

Mr Bush arrived in Barranquilla, Colombia's main commercial port 50 miles up the coast, and then flew to Cartagena in a US Air Force helicopter which had flown in from an aircraft carrier in international waters.

Before leaving Washington, Mr Bush said he hoped the summit would produce "a cartel composed of four countries... not a cartel dedicated to the promotion of narcotics but an anti-drugs cartel which fights this enormous problem which affects all countries."

Yet among the South American participants there are considerable doubts that Mr Bush is ready to put his money where his mouth is. For all his rhetoric, he has earmarked \$430 million (£252 million) in total annual aid to Colombia, Peru and Bolivia.

where coca is cultivated and cocaine produced, compared with \$1 billion to tiny post-invasion Panama.

Señor Enrique Santos Calderón, an influential communist on Colombia's biggest selling daily, *El Tiempo*, commented yesterday: "If the United States does not have the money to go to the roots of a problem which gnaws at its internal organs, or if its economic priorities are elsewhere — in Eastern Europe, for example — there is no hope for solutions in the short or medium range."

In a speech welcoming the three visiting presidents to Cartagena, President Barco said: "We hope that this summit will mark a milestone in the international struggle against the production, the trafficking and the consumption of illicit drugs."

● LONDON: Industrialized nations concerned about international drug trafficking should be prepared to spend more on financing alternative crops in Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, according to a new assessment published by the Panos Institute yesterday (Michael Knipe writes).

Drug users in the US spend approximately \$20 billion per year on cocaine — the equivalent of the collective gross national products of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, says Panos, an international policy study institute.

Cocaine money played a vital role in helping to cushion the economic crisis facing Bolivia and Peru, due to debt and structural adjustment and in contributing to Colombia's healthier economic performance.

## Moscow urges Assad to alter stance on Israel

From Richard Owen, Jerusalem

Signs of a shift in Syria's attitude to Israel emerged yesterday as Israeli officials said the two countries had been putting out peace "feelers" to each other.

But Mr Yitzhak Shamir, the Israeli Prime Minister, dismissed reports that the two sides, hitherto bitter enemies, had twice held informal meetings in Vienna as the figment of a fertile imagination.

Officials said there had been "indirect contacts". Under pressure from Moscow, President Assad of Syria has reportedly indicated that he will not obstruct a proposed Israeli-Palestinian dialogue on the Palestinian question.

On the other hand, he remains committed to recovering the Golan Heights.

There have been unconfirmed reports of behind-the-scenes Israeli-Syrian contacts since the 1973 Middle East War, in which Syria failed to regain the Heights. Israel occupied them in the Six-Day War of 1967 and officially annexed the area in 1981. The new exploratory "feelers" stem from radical changes in the East-West relationship.

Moscow has told Damascus it must ease its quest for military victory and focus instead on diplomatic methods to achieve its goals. Yesterday, Syrian officials indicated that the aim of Damascus remained Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967, including the Golan Heights, as well as the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr Sami al-Saleh, the secretary of the ruling Baath party in Kuneitra, has reportedly said that Damascus would "never, never accept Beirut — Christian troops loyal to General Michel Aoun attacked the rival Christian militia base south of the Lebanese capital yesterday, killing 14 people and wounding 90 (A Correspondent writes). Tanks and armoured personnel carriers took part in the raid on the stronghold of the Lebanese Forces militia chief, Commander Samir Geagea, who said his men repulsed the attack.

under any circumstances an bargaining over the Golan". Syrian officials said any peace talks between Damascus and Jerusalem must be accompanied by simultaneous negotiations by Israel on all the other occupied territories.

Signs of a change of tack by Damascus first came with the recent reconciliation between

Syria and Egypt. Further indications of a new policy have come from US and United Nations officials who visited the two countries.

Mr Cyrus Vance, the former US Secretary of State, told Israeli officials recently that President Assad appeared inclined toward negotiations rather than aggression.

This week M Jean-Claude Aimee, adviser on Middle East affairs to Señor Javier Pérez de Cuellar, the UN Secretary-General, told Israeli officials that President Assad still believed an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue would fail, but would do nothing to prevent it taking place.

Syria controls several extremist Palestinian factions opposed to the decision by the Palestine Liberation Organization to accept "two states in Palestine", one Jewish and one Arab.

President Assad is also reported to be ready to agree to an international Middle East peace conference, held under the auspices of the two superpowers rather than of the UN Security Council. Israeli officials are using these signs of a reduction in the Syrian threat to argue for cuts in Israel's huge defence budget.

## Moscow reflects on bitter-sweet Afghan legacy

From Mary Dejevsky, Moscow

The bells of the 17th-century Church of the Resurrection rang out across central Moscow yesterday to commemorate the first anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

*Pravda* published a panegyric, with romantic photographs, to General Boris Gromov, the Soviet commander in Afghanistan and the last Soviet soldier to cross the border. Mr Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, set out new proposals for ending a war in which Moscow is now only peripherally engaged.

Each episode revealed a facet of the continuing price Moscow is paying for its intervention in Afghanistan, one year after President Gorbachev brought the troops home.

Mr Shevardnadze's proposals — for the eventual demilitarization of the country, to be preceded by all-party talks under United Nations auspices,

a ceasefire, and temporary preservation of the territorial status quo between the Kremlin-backed Government and the Mujahidin — showed that the Soviet Union still feels the need for peace on its southern frontier and continues to nurture a sense of responsibility for the fate of its protégé, President Najibullah. Charges that civil war would not have come about in Afghanistan had it not been for the Soviet intervention are heard as frequently now as they were when the Kremlin pull-out began.

General Gromov, photographed in the arms of his adoring wife on the back page of *Pravda* (a photograph quite unlike any usually published by the party paper), is one of the few beneficiaries of the war. Now head of the Kiev military region in Ukraine, he was elected last year as a deputy to the Congress of People's Deputies. He is a convincing orator, for whom many predict a dazzling political

career. The *Pravda* tribute will have done the budding politician no harm.

The general, the paper's correspondent wrote, is studying for a higher degree and newly married to Faina. His first wife, by whom he had two children, died in an air crash five years ago. Now, *Pravda* said, he has assumed more family responsibilities with his new wife's five-year-old twin girls. Having dispensed with the uncharacteristic human interest story, *Pravda* then recounted the work he is doing to help demobilized servicemen and their families — the lack of facilities and jobs for returning officers is a source of deep dissatisfaction within the military.

As the bells rang out across Gorky Street, a small group of veterans, some in tears, stood in the churchyard in driving snow.

Another even smaller group, of officers, with several stars on the epaulettes of their blue-grey great-

coats, talked softly about their disappointment and frustration to a Moscow television team.

"The Afghan victims are not acknowledged by any other part of Soviet society. It has been left to the Church to remember us," a retired officer said.

All had taken part in a memorial service, the first of its kind, conducted by Bishop Pitirim for officers and men who had served in Afghanistan. Interspersed with the haunting music of the Russian Orthodox liturgy were prayers for the dead and the living, and imprecations to the soldier-martyrs of the Russian Church. At the end, the congregation quietly sang *Eternal Memory* for the fallen.

The church was crowded, with the majority of the congregation women. A retired officer said that the act of remembrance "helps you to stay human after all the inhumanity you have seen".

## Briton dies as snow brings chaos to Alps

From Susan MacDonald, Paris

A Briton was identified as one of the victims of the sudden deluge of snow that brought chaos to the Alps this week, and left at least 200,000 skiers stranded in the French Alps yesterday. About 10 French ski resorts were cut off after snowstorms and rain caused avalanches, and the French Meteorological Office issued "maximum alert" avalanche warnings.

Terence Murnaghan, aged 47, from London, was killed on Wednesday when the chalet he was sheltering in was swept away by an avalanche at Le Joseret, near Val-d'Isère.

In eastern Switzerland, a mudslide buried rescuers searching for the victim of an earlier slide. One search-dog handler was killed and another critically injured.

equivalent of a month's worth of rain on some towns, and record snowfall blanketed parts of the Alps. Yesterday 100 rescue-teams and 60 troops were sent to the Savoie region of the French Alps.

In Austria another Briton, Timothy Magee, aged 16, was killed on Monday when he fell into a narrow ditch, police said yesterday. He had been on holiday with his family in the resort of Saalbach-Hinterglemm about 37 miles south of Salzburg. Police said he broke his neck and died instantly.

Up to last weekend many ski resorts were practically devoid of snow.

could miss the boat altogether and would have done better to join three other former prime ministers, Mr Takeo Fukuda, Mr Kakuei Tanaka and Mr Zenko Suzuki, in retiring gracefully at this election. But Mr Nakasone is too ambitious for that.

He is running as an independent, after being nudged out of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party because of his links to Recruit. Sunday's vote could finally draw the curtain down on a political career that Mr Nakasone, at least, thought still had a long way to run.

since the Recruit affair leaves him in fourth place among the four MPs who head back to Tokyo. Some analysts say he

There are also many who will speak loudly against him. "Mr Nakasone was called 'kyoaku' (giant evil) in connection with the Recruit scandal," says Mr Kenichi Shiraiishi, a union-backed candidate running against him. Nakasone's is a multi-sect constituency, which returns four MPs. It would be embarrassing if the downturn in Mr Nakasone's popularity

## Singapore steps up cocaine war

Singapore (AP) — Singapore has extended the mandatory death penalty to cover traffickers in cocaine, opium and marijuana. The new law covers manufacturing, importing or exporting just more than an ounce of cocaine, about 1 lb of marijuana, some 7oz of hashish and just more than 2½ lb of opium.

Yacht rescue

Madrid — A Spanish fishing-vessel rescued two Britons, Mr Lawrence Ladell and his son, Stephen, after their 40ft yacht, the San Vica, exploded and caught fire about 13 miles south of Palma de Mallorca.

Law relaxed

Colombo (AFP) — The Sri Lankan Government has lifted several emergency regulations, including one which allowed security forces to dispose of bodies without holding inquests.

Pakistani held

Nicosia (Reuters) — A court at a British base in Cyprus has ordered a Pakistani suspected of smuggling heroin into Britain to be detained pending a request for extradition.

Military code

Seoul (AFP) — A new code of conduct in Korea has banned the beating of recruits by sergeants during training and forbidden military personnel from meddling in politics.

Murder ruling

Lausanne (Reuters) — A Swiss court has ruled that Signor Antonio de Luca, a suspected member of Italy's Red Brigades, can be extradited to Italy on a murder charge.

Death toll up

Maputo (Reuters) — The death toll in the Mozambique National Resistance attack on a train in the south of the country has risen to 55.

Tokyo action

Tokyo (Reuters) — Japan is to make it a crime to launder the profits of illegal drug dealing.

## Humbled Nakasone battles to stay on the political stage

From Joe Joseph, Gunma, Japan

"Telling you Mr Nakasone's schedule is like giving information to the enemy," says Mr Katsumi Kobayashi, the manager of Mr Yasuhiro Nakasone's campaign headquarters. If this is an unhelpful start to the day, it at least gives an idea of the panic at Mr Nakasone's election offices.

Once Japan's most famous statesman, perhaps still the only Japanese Prime Minister many foreigners could name, Mr Nakasone may well lose his seat at Sunday's general election.

Mr Nakasone looks like a hunted man and the press has descended on his constituency



Mr Nakasone: Giving the press the cold shoulder.

in Gunma, a mountainous, rice-farming area north-west of Tokyo, hoping for a kill.

But Mr Nakasone is just 71

years old — sprightly for a Japanese politician — and still dreams of leading his country again. He is fighting to rebuild his shattered image and has decided that a nagging press is an unnecessary obstacle.

He reserves his coldest shoulder for Japan's *Asahi* newspaper, which recently accused him of being linked to a shady, but very lucrative, stock deal, which he denies. Now *Asahi* reporters are not allowed into Mr Nakasone's office in the city of Takasaki.

The press hung like vultures over him last summer when it was wrongly thought he might be questioned by police over the Recruit bribery scandal, which struck at the heart of Mr Nakasone's administration,

though it came to light only much later. The newspapermen are back because they think Gunma's voters at Sunday's poll might give Mr Nakasone his come-uppance by robbing him of the seat he has held since 1947.

It is embarrassing enough that he has campaigned at all in his own constituency, usually thought of as a former Prime Minister. That he has wooed voters for almost six months like a love-struck suitor has made him the butt of ridicule.

This year, no corner shop is too small for a visit from Mr Nakasone and locals say that high-handed lectures on his international vision have given way to a more humble

"please" and "thank you". With the help of a local taxi driver, a tip from an *Asahi* journalist and a turn of luck, we tracked down Mr Nakasone in a restaurant in Anaka, a town close to his Takasaki campaign offices.

After three hours he emerged wearing a traditional election candidate's name-sash bigger than Miss World's, but he was reluctant to linger. Should the rest of the world be interested in this general election?

"I think so." Why is that? "That's a question. I'm not answering questions from the press during the campaign. You're trying to have a question-and-answer session. No

thank you. I'm awfully sorry." But if Mr Nakasone will not speak, there are many who will speak for him.

"That such a great man will honour us with his presence moves us to tears," says Mrs Ritsue Aoki, chairman of a 50,000-strong, all-women support group.

There are also many who will speak loudly against him. "Mr Nakasone was called 'kyoaku' (giant evil) in connection with the Recruit scandal," says Mr Kenichi Shiraiishi, a union-backed candidate running against him.

Nakasone's is a multi-sect constituency, which returns four MPs. It would be embarrassing if the downturn in Mr Nakasone's popularity

from cabins full of cigarette smoke, although working in the air heightens the risk of contracting cancer only moderately above the average.

About 22,000 Americans in 100,000 are expected to die from cancer. The study, on westbound flights, estimates that for airline staff who have flown 960 hours a year for 20 years on internal flights of at least three hours, the cancer death rate will be raised by 59 to 61 per 100,000. Passengers on the same routes, flying only half as many hours, are predicted to suffer 30 extra fatal cancer cases per 100,000.

Dr Michael Ginevan, a scientist who compiled the statistics, said:

"If I were a woman in the critical period of pregnancy for retardation (weeks eight to 15), I would tend to avoid flights to Europe." He said that, since he completed the statistical work, new studies had revised the expected cancer rate for survivors of low radiation doses in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to double or triple the earlier expected rate.

Airline unions have expressed concern about exposure to radiation. But some scientists say that the average doses are too low to cause acute illness, even for frequent travellers on the riskiest routes, and airline officials say that they are still treating heart disease as a greater problem.

## Cosmic radiation study shows increased cancer risk for high-flyers

From Susan Elliott, Washington

Air crews and passengers who fly on certain routes are exposed to more radiation than most workers at nuclear plants, a US government study shows.

Although scientists cannot assess precisely the long-term effects of low radiation doses, the report, issued this week by the Department of Transportation, states that people who fly a lot receive greater than expected doses of radiation from the Sun and stars. Some radiation experts are cited in the report as recommending that women in the early stages of

pregnancy avoid flying on the riskiest routes.

Radiation absorbed while flying differs according to latitude and altitude, increasing the nearer an aircraft is to the Poles. Concern about cosmic radiation has grown with the trend for aircraft to fly longer and at higher altitudes, where the protective atmosphere is thinner.

Increasingly, aircraft flying between Europe and the United States pass over the North Pole, where the effect of the Earth's magnetic field raises radiation levels to four times those at the Equator. The fastest aircraft, such as Concorde and corporate jets, are

particularly vulnerable since they fly higher than others.

Experts advocate the installation of devices in cockpits that would advise pilots to drop altitude to avoid particularly high levels of high-energy radiation. Such equipment would also alert pilots on the rare occasions when the Sun's radiation, which varies considerably, reaches levels that the study says pregnant women flying only once should avoid.

Flying at 40,000 ft over the North Pole produces a radiation level of 1.4 millirems an hour, compared with 0.4 millirems an hour at the same altitude over the Equator. On the ground, where rocks and

minerals emit radiation, the average level in New York is estimated at 0.0056 millirems an hour.

One medical scientist said that radiation levels absorbed by air passengers were sometimes as high as those that require warnings to workers in nuclear plants or other industrial jobs involving contact with X-rays and other radiation sources. As airlines are not covered by the government safety regulations that regulate employees' exposure, these levels are higher than those which most nuclear plant workers experience.

The government study showed that airline staff run a similar health risk from radiation to that

from cabins full of cigarette smoke, although working in the air heightens the risk of contracting cancer only moderately above the average.

About 22,000 Americans in 100,000 are expected to die from cancer. The study, on westbound flights, estimates that for airline staff who have flown 960 hours a year for 20 years on internal flights of at least three hours, the cancer death rate will be raised by 59 to 61 per 100,000. Passengers on the same routes, flying only half as many hours, are predicted to suffer 30 extra fatal cancer cases per 100,000.

Dr Michael Ginevan, a scientist who compiled the statistics, said:

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February 15 1990

## PARLIAMENT

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## Thatcher clashes with Kinnock on mortgage rates

Mr Neil Kinnock accepted the Prime Minister's "confession" at question time that it was her Government's economic policies that had led to the present record levels of mortgage interest rates.

Mrs Thatcher said that the excellence of these policies had also led to millions more home owners.

The Leader of the Opposition took advantage of an exchange on "capping" local government expenditure to ask Mrs Thatcher what she thought she had done to imposing a cap on mortgage rates.

Mrs Thatcher said that there were now some three million more people able to take out mortgages than there were in 1979, and many more than owned their own homes than 10 years ago. That was a good record.

Mr Kinnock said that the Prime Minister should stop dodging the question and simply own up to the fact that the

record for mortgage rises was due entirely to her economic policies.

Mrs Thatcher said that also due to the Government's economic policies, as Mr Kinnock might know if he looked at Social Trends today, was a 25 per cent increase in real household disposable income between 1981 and 1988.

There were now 15 million owner-occupied homes, compared to 11.6 million under Labour. That was due to the excellence of Conservative economic policies.

Mr Kinnock said that to use the Prime Minister's word, "also", he accepted her confession.

Mrs Thatcher said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had handled the economy excellently. Well over 99 per cent of an increasing number of mortgage holders managed to pay their mortgage payments very well. They would find them to be of great benefit. They were a very good investment.

Mr John Gort (Hendon North, C) asked whether, in the

light of Mr Kinnock's questions, it had been due to her economic policies that the level of manufacturing had gone up for the second successive year (Labour laughter) ... that unemployment was virtually at the lowest level in Western Europe?

That would eventually contribute to bringing down the level of interest rates.

Mrs Thatcher said that 1988 and last year had been two years of excellent manufacturing investment. Today's figures showed a record number of jobs. The Government took all necessary measures to keep bearing down on inflation.

Mr Gavin Strang (Edinburgh East, Lab) asked her to consider the plight of hundreds of thousands of council tenants who had been encouraged to buy their houses. The Government should reconsider its policy of cutting support for council housing, thus bringing pressure on tenants to buy, by forcing council rents up.

Mrs Thatcher said that many tenants had bought and were grateful for that opportunity.

## Palace of Westminster as it might have been



The Soviet Ambassador will be opening an exhibition at the Palace of Westminster today of paintings by Thomas Allen of Barry's original design for his new buildings. The paintings, and drawings by Barry, have been in Russia since they were presented to Tsar Nicholas I on his visit to the new palace's construction site. The painting above - ink and watercolour on paper - shows the palace with a redesigned Westminster Bridge in the foreground.

## Major resists calls to aid home buyers

MPs from both sides pressed the Chancellor of the Exchequer to announce an early cut in interest rates, particularly to help home buyers. But Mr John Major said that, although it would be attractive to announce and early cut, it would not be sensible until he could be certain that it was right in terms of beating inflation.

He acknowledged the difficulties facing home buyers and said that about 70,000 people with mortgages were more than six months in arrears, less than half of 1 per cent of the total of home owners. Most repossession stemmed from the break-up of marriages.

Mr Andrew Bessant-Dark (Birmingham, Selby, C) said that many Conservative MPs would be pleased that the pound and interest rates were no longer tied to the Deutschmark because West Germany's headlong and precipitate flight to reunification was likely to lead to higher interest rates.

Could they have an assurance that British interest rates would not follow them because British industry could not sustain them nor compete with them?

Mr Major: I will continue to judge interest rate levels on what I believe is right for counter-inflation policy in this country.

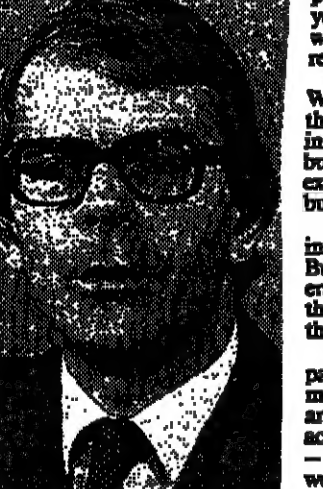
Mr Alan Beith, Liberal Democrat spokesman on Treasury affairs, said that yesterday's announcement on mortgage rates by one building society spelt tragedy for many people as well as a great deal of pressure on wage negotiations in the coming year.

Could the Chancellor in-

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dicating any hope of a reduction in interest rates to the rest of the building societies, so long as he refused to make a clear commitment to early entry to the exchange-rate mechanism?

Or were they to put up interest rates in anticipation that the rates were going to remain high? Mr Major said that it would be attractive to stand up and say that he foresaw an early or immediate reduction in levels of interest rates. "It would be unwise to make that commitment until it is right in terms of beating inflation and until I am certain that it is right, and that when we bring interest rates



Mr Major: Agrees home buyers are in difficulty

down, we can safely keep them down."

Mr Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne, Lab) quoted the Government as saying often that if economic policy was not hurting, it was not working. The real hurt was being caused to manufacturing industry, investment and home owners.

When was the Government going to open its eyes to the fact that it was not working? Mr Major said that it was not working, although not perfect, could give some help?

Mr Major said that he shared concern for those who were facing difficulties. The levels of difficulties and arrears, however, though a little higher, were still at a low level and the great majority of repossession resulted from marriage break-up rather than high interest rates.

Mr Tim Smith (Beaconsfield, C) said that only 0.73 per cent of mortgage holders were in arrears - and that proportion was lower than in 1985 and, by definition, 99.27 per cent were not in arrears.

Mr Major accepted that arrears cases were difficult and painful, but they were not running at the critical level that had been implied.

Mr Tony Benn (Chesterfield, Lab) said that, quite apart from the tragedy of repossession, many people who thought they were home owners were discovering that they were home buyers and the Government was not interested in home buyers.

Mr Major said that the number of properties taken into possession last year amounted to less than a fifth of 1 per cent of all building society loans and

that problem had been there for a long time. It existed when Mr Benn was a minister.

Mr Bob Dunn (Dartford, C) said that over two million people had bought their own homes since 1979. There was a strong case for raising the level of mortgage tax relief from £30,000 to £50,000 to take account of the huge increase in value of homes especially in the South-east and particularly in north-west Kent (Conservative cheers).

Mr Major said that he noted Mr Dunn's representations. Home ownership had risen from 55 per cent to 65 per cent in the past decade and there was still a big demand for home ownership which he expected to continue.

Mr John Smith, chief Opposition spokesman on Treasury affairs, said that the Conservative Party manifesto in 1979 blamed the level of interest rates and mortgage repayments on government mismanagement.

After 11 years of Conservative Government, was this still true? Was government mismanagement the reason for the misery?

Mr Major said that what the Conservatives said in 1979 was correct. Under Labour there had been negative interest rates which had pushed up inflation and wrecked the economy.

Mrs Edwina Currie (South Derbyshire, C) said that building societies which had been lending people up to three and four times their incomes had contributed to the over-valuing of properties should "really take some of the blame".

Mr Major agreed that people should be prudent in the borrowing they took on.

## Student loan plan 'is far too dear'

Government plans to introduce a student loans scheme were attacked by Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs when the Commons considered the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

Mr Jack Straw, chief Opposition spokesman on education, said that the scheme was more expensive even than they had expected. It would waste at least £2 billion between now and the year 2010 - money which was going to disappear into a vast black hole of administrative expenses, defaults and deferrals.

He moved a new clause establishing an advisory committee to give overall advice on the nature, running and administration of the scheme.

He said that the need for continuing advice to the Secretary of State about the scheme had never been clearer. It had been a very bad scheme when the House debated it on second reading in December, but it was emerging much worse from committee and with far fewer friends.

The estimated losses did not take into account the significant but as yet unquantified cost of interest-rate subsidy.

The Government intended to replace the whole of the grants system with loans.

Mr John MacGregor, Secretary of State for Education and Science, said that that was a ridiculous charge. Mr Straw knew perfectly well that was not the case. The student grants

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scheme for maintenance support would continue.

Mr Straw said that the loans would penalize groups, such as medical students and those training to be teachers. It would harm access to higher education for students with low-income parents.

Labour would not waste money on loan schemes and so it would have sufficient cash to pay for the extension it envisaged in higher education.

Mr Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat spokesman on education, said that still no one had any idea of how the loan scheme was to be implemented.

The banks had refused to operate a loan scheme; another scheme had been put to the universities for them to operate and, in their turn, the universities were putting forward proposals of their own. "We are taking several steps in the dark."

The Government was producing a scheme which cost more but gave the student less.

Most concern surrounded question of whether the move to loans would decrease the number entering higher education.

There was a clear need for the scheme to be monitored.

Mr Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire, C) said that he had not voted for the Bill in the past and would not vote for it tonight unless he heard some sort of government assurance on the lines of the new clause.

## Dog tags 'a silly proposal'

Mr Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent South, Lab) said that he had never heard anything so silly as the suggestion of Mr David Heathcoat-Amory, Under Secretary of State for the Environment, that the way to deal with Rotterweilers was to put name tags on them.

No one suggested putting name tags on lions and tigers and allowing them to roam the streets. Rotterweilers should be banned.

Sir Geoffrey Howe, Leader of the House, said that he would draw Mr Ashley's concern to the attention of the Home Secretary (Mr David Waddington).

## Age of consent 'must stay'

To reduce the age of consent for homosexuality would give totally the wrong signal at present and would give offence to many people, and worry many more, Mrs Thatcher said during question time.

Mr David Marth (Portsmouth South, C) had said that for various reasons, including the spreading and contracting of Aids, any proposals to reduce the age of consent for homosexuality were unacceptable and "utterly crackers".

Mrs Thatcher agreed. She said that such proposals would cause great problems in future and she was very much against reducing the age of consent.

## EC routes for drugs

A large part of seizures of drugs at United Kingdom ports and airports had been sent from or routed through other European Community countries, and last year they amounted to 40 per cent of the weight of drugs seized, Mr Richard Ryder, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said in a written reply.

He said that the overall number of seizures last year showed an increase over the previous year of about 40 per cent: 40 per cent by weight for heroin; 30 per cent for cocaine and 130 per cent for cannabis resin.

## BR borrowing powers up

An Opposition motion in the Commons on Wednesday night, condemning the Government's approach to British Rail and London Underground, was rejected by 259 votes to 212 - Government majority, 47.

During the debate, Mr Michael Portillo, Minister for Public Transport, announced an increase of £220 million in British Rail borrowing powers, to enable it to press ahead with investment, including that on the Channel tunnel.

## Reunification for Germany

Britain was pledged, by long-standing agreements, to support German reunification, but the concern had been to have a proper framework in which to make certain of security and stability in Europe, Mrs Thatcher said at question time.

## Ship subsidy

The maximum level of subsidy for merchant ships will be reduced from 26 per cent to 20 per cent from January 1 this year, Mr Douglas Hogg, Minister for Industry, said in a written Commons reply.

## Parliament today

Commons (9.30): Private member's Bill: Sexual Offences Bill, second reading.

## Opposition debate: South Africa

## Government 'must reserve the right to lift sanctions'

The following report of later speeches in a Commons debate on an Opposition motion on the Government's South Africa policy appeared in later editions yesterday.

If the United Kingdom failed to reach agreement with its EC partners on sanctions against South Africa, "the Government must reserve the right to act on its own", Mr William Widdows, Minister of State, Foreign Office, said. "That is the legal position."

Winding up the debate, he said that EC sanctions had been designed to bring about multiracial dialogue in South Africa and to say that lifting them must wait for the repeal of the Group Areas Act and other pillars of apartheid was a misunderstanding.

A South African Government spokesman had said that negotiations would be about removal of what remained of apartheid and about universal suffrage in a united South Africa. "If that is not putting the pillars of apartheid on the table, I don't know what is."

Earlier, Sir David Steel, Liberal Democrat spokesman on foreign affairs, said that for the Foreign

Secretary to plan a reasonable programme for lifting sanctions and pressures was a sensible response to change, but he did object to its being done prematurely and not in concert with Britain's European and other partners.

President de Klerk had brought about an enormous improvement, but there was still anxiety that, just as when Dr Botha had promised change, nothing would be done in the end.

Every section of white opinion, even those who did not agree with the imposition of sanctions, acknowledged that international pressures had played their part in bringing about the change.

He could not find anyone in the black community who believed that the Prime Minister had not hindered that change. That was unfair. Her private pressures had been helpful.

Nelson Mandela was the one person who could remind the black movement, as it must be reminded. There would be immense pressure from young people in South Africa to move quickly.

Mr Bernie Grant (Tottenham, Lab), just back from South Africa,

said that unless something of substance was done quickly there would be an almighty bloodbath there. He had seen a perfectly peaceful rally being fired on by the security forces. The continuation of the state of emergency allowed such atrocities because it empowered the police and security forces to act without accountability.

That was why the ANC called for the cancellation of the state of emergency and why it was a prerequisite for talks.

Mrs Thatcher sought to make petty distinctions between different kinds of sanctions. "But to the man on the omnibus in Soweto, or on the train going into Johannesburg, these distinctions do not really mean much."

For the British Prime Minister to talk about removing sanctions was to these people a "jellyroll".

"It seems that the Prime Minister wishes to see the mass democratic movement going naked into the negotiating chamber."

Mr George Galloway (Reigate, C) said that blacks in South Africa did not want to have a vote on empty bellies. If sanctions had had any

effect, it had been to impoverish the black population.

Mr Robert Hughes (Aberdeen North, Lab), chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, said that the Prime Minister's epicurean view had meant the policy had been the Wicked Fairy in Snow White, looking in the mirror to see who was the cleverest of them all. She had colluded with oppression.

Mr Trevor Stanbrook (Orpington, C) said that he was mystified by the Government's policy and could not support it. Judging by the wording of its amendment to the motion one would think there was little to be contentious about in South Africa, where some 80 per cent of the population was deprived of civil rights.

Apartheid was an evil and wicked doctrine used by unscrupulous people to justify retention of power by a minority who used whips and dogs against those who protested.

It deprived the majority of the vote and the right to live where they chose in the name of racial superiority. It was contemptible. He would have expected better from his own Govern-

ment in the way it had worded the amendment.

Ministers had applied the few sanctions timidly and half-heartedly. At the first sign of their working they were being withdrawn. The Government's policy had been to give a chance of policy by President de Klerk. Ministers made themselves look foolish when they asserted otherwise.

The Government had no interest in propping up a doomed regime. It should put its money on Mr Mandela and give him the help he required to bring peace, reconciliation and democracy to this great African country.

Mr Bowen Wells (Hertford and Sturtford, C) said that this was not the time to talk of loosening sanctions. They should be encouraging everybody in South Africa who wanted evolution to democracy.

Mr David Owen, leader of the SDP, a former Foreign Secretary, said that the Council of Ministers in Dublin would not dream of lifting sanctions while there was any conception of the state of emergency. Britain was bound by the resolution of 1986 and

by honour, which was far more important. Prosperity would not be restored by unilateral action by Britain on this question.

President de Klerk must be encouraged to act in a manner which ensured there could be no going back. It was going to be very difficult to have international agreement on a serious reduction of sanctions until negotiations had started.

Mr Donald Anderson, an Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, said that the Prime Minister was gratuitously using up international good will towards that system which has done so much damage to them. "In that context the Prime Minister's invitation to Mr Mandela to visit this country was naive and imprudent."

The Opposition motion was rejected by 278 votes to 214. Government majority, 64 - and the amendment was agreed without division.

Letters, page 13

## More power for MPs on EC

By Sheila Gunn, Political Reporter

Sir Geoffrey Howe, deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Commons, is ready to approve key recommendations of the Commons procedure committee's report for giving backbench MPs more influence over the future direction of the European Community.

After agreement in a Cabinet subcommittee, he is preparing to pledge a full day's debate in the Commons before the twice-yearly EC summit meetings. They would replace the present system of debates on White Papers on developments in the Community.

Ministers will be expected to provide an outline of the summit agenda before the debate to give MPs the opportunity to declare their views on the key issues.

It will put pressure on Mrs Margaret Thatcher and her Cabinet to reflect the majority view of MPs on such issues as the speed towards European monetary union.

The change is part of a package of reforms being considered to give Community proposals a higher profile at Westminster.

Sir Geoffrey is known to be sympathetic to the MPs' complaints and is ready to arrange for more general debates on EC issues.

In particular, he is determined that the Commons examination of EC proposals should be more forward-looking, to replace the present system, which, MPs complain, tends to be reactive, carrying little influence on the final laws.

No decision has been reached yet by the Cabinet subcommittee, chaired by Sir Geoffrey, on the committee's call for standing committees. The proposed committees would



Sir Geoffrey: Ready to approve recommendations.

examine EC proposals on agriculture, trade and industry; Treasury; transport and environment; and general issues.

But it has conceded the need for a more thorough scrutiny of

EC draft laws by having evidence-taking sessions, building on the standing committee system.

Like the committee, Sir Geoffrey is opposed to setting up a select committee on European affairs similar to the House of Lords committee, which is suggested by the former Leader of the House, Mr John Biffen.

Sir Geoffrey is understood to have been persuaded by arguments against the idea put by Mr Terence Higgins, chairman of the Commons liaison committee. However, he wants to encourage the present network of Commons select committees to take a greater interest in Community-wide policies.

The Government's formal response to the report has been delayed because the changes are fundamental to the working of Parliament and involve most departments. But it is expected to be published before Easter.

Discussions with the whips will also be necessary because they will have to find enough backbenchers to sit on the new committees.

## Parliament next week

The main business in the Commons next week will be:

Monday: Debate on SNP motion on the ambulance dispute. Private Bills.

Tuesday: Debates on Opposition motion on the effects of electricity privatization and on the Royal Shakespeare Company. Motion on the Clergy (Ordination) Measure.

Wednesday: Debate on Commons procedure. Government Trading Bill, remaining stages. Thursday: Debate on East-West relations.

Friday: Private members' Bills: Rights of Way (Agricultural Land) Bill and Access to Health Records Bill, second readings.

The main business in the Lords is expected to be: Monday: Food Safety Bill, third reading. Debate on EC social charter.

Tuesday: Courts and Legal Services Bill, report, first day. Wednesday: Debate on manufacturing industry. Abortion (Amendment) Bill, committee. Thursday: Courts and Legal Services Bill, report, second day.

## Move on tobacco sales to young

The Government is considering proposals to strengthen and clarify the responsibilities of retailers in the sale of tobacco to youngsters under 16, Mr Peter Lloyd, Under Secretary of State, Home Office, said in a late night debate in the Commons.

The legislation was not yet ready, he said, but the Government would introduce its proposals as soon as a suitable legislative vehicle was available. He added that was unlikely to be in the present parliamentary session.

He was replying to a debate initiated by Mr John Hume (East Lothian, Lab), who said that the 1986 Act prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to youngsters was being cynically circumvented by the industry and flouted by retailers.

"This 'teeny' trade is worth £70 million a year to the tobacco trade. The Government has failed to lift a finger to enforce the 1986 Act which was passed

without dissent in this House. Nobody is being deterred. The trade is treating Parliament with contempt and is threatening the health of the next generation."

Mr Lloyd said that selling cigarettes to youngsters was deeply irresponsible. It was for the police and local authority trading standards officers to enforce the law. Both had powers, duties and responsibilities, but he accepted that they were unevenly applied.

The good news was that fewer children were smoking. Latest statistics showed that in 1984, 13 per cent of under-16s admitted smoking; by 1986 it had fallen to 10 per cent, and in 1988 the figure was 8 per cent.

The Department of Health was launching a £2 million campaign to reduce the number of teenage smokers, with the aim of cutting the figure by a third by 1994. In addition, the tobacco trade was spending £1 million to inform retailers about the law.



## SPECTRUM

# Has the Perrier bubble burst?

Perrier was first marketed at the turn of the century as "the Champagne of Table Waters", and its success ever since has been associated with an image of sparkling purity. But yesterday, as tens of millions of bottles were being pulled off shop shelves throughout the world because of a scare over benzene contamination, doubts were cast on whether it would ever again be possible to present it as the last name in quality.

Source Perrier, the parent company, has made itself the most successful of mineral water firms by marketing what is essentially an idea. The fizzy water it draws from a spring at Vergèze, near Nîmes, costs only pence to bottle — but commands £2.35 at the Ritz. During the past 10 years Perrier has led a boom in the sales of mineral water, exploiting a public mood for healthy living and becoming a status symbol along with the Porsche and the Filofax. Keen to associate itself with healthy living, Source Perrier, has sponsored sporting events throughout the world, including the New York marathon. And backed by shrewd promotion, Perrier water has come to symbolize a lifestyle. As the inventors of the advertising campaign said: "The key task was to make the cynical British public pay for bottled water."

The advertisers succeeded. For consumers, the mention of Perrier evokes an image of water gushing from mountains. The truth is less picturesque — the area of western Provence where the spring is situated is mostly flat.



Yesterday, at the Hôtel Bar des Sports, near the source, mineral water of any brand was not much in demand. But lunchtime drinkers passed their own boozy vote of confidence in a drink which has put their town on the map (though it remains difficult to convince them that there are people who will happily pay the price of a perfectly decent bottle of Beaujolais for a glass of the pride of Vergèze).

Indeed, the citizens appeared resolutely unconcerned by the great *brouhaha* over the enforced withdrawal of 160 million bottles from world markets. If ever there was a company town, it is here. Source Perrier provides work for about 3,300 people, and on the evidence of yesterday's mini-invasion by journalists, they are both proud and happy to be working for the company. According to Jean-Pierre

Roux, the plant's genial director of human resources, they are positively bursting to get production back up to normal.

So what about the Communist Party pickets outside the plant, distributing leaflets accusing Source Perrier of swimming among the "great white sharks" of capitalism? Well, it is certainly a paternalistic company, run for the past 40 years and more by the patrician Gustave Leven, aged 75, whose family owns a substantial block of shares in the business.

On Wednesday, it was Leven's misfortune to collide with the Parisian Press out for blood at what some believe to have been the first formal news conference the famously secretive company has ever organized.

A pleasant-looking, apple-cheeked man, he seemed disconcerted by the ferocity of the attentions of the large and

It is the most famous of the designer waters, the symbol of chic — and, as of this week, the latest product to be taken from the world's supermarket shelves because of health fears. Now Perrier faces its toughest trial of public confidence. Jamie Dettmer and Philip Jacobson report

unruly corps assembled at Perrier headquarters on the Rue de Courcelles.

Insiders say it was, however, entirely in character for Leven to refuse to comment on the inquiry on the Paris Bourse (stock exchange) into suspiciously heavy trading of Perrier shares immediately before the furore became public knowledge. "We are talking about a company which has never before considered it necessary to keep shareholders informed of its actions," said one Bourse informant.

Back in Vergèze, locals were expressing total confidence in Perrier's ability to bounce back. But advertising agencies were divided as to whether it would be able to reclaim its leading position in the mineral water market — one of the most competitive in food and drink retailing.

Several food and drink

companies which have suffered health scares in the past have found that a comeback is not easy. One company selling tinned salmon took 11 years to regain its market position after a contamination problem which led to the withdrawal of all of its supplies from shops for two weeks.

Unexpected snags can cause setbacks, too. In one contamination scare, the Safeway supermarkets chain failed to check its adverts and was embarrassed by its slogan of "Everything you want from a store and a little bit more".

Senior managers at Source Perrier were already planning a new marketing strategy as Leven announced in Paris the decision to withdraw the entire world stock. They had been preparing for the worst

the moment the first hint of a contamination problem appeared last weekend, when traces of benzene were discovered in supplies in the American state of North Carolina. Within hours, Source Perrier had instructed subsidiaries in Europe to monitor customer reaction to the scare on a daily basis through market research surveys.

Like any other successful enterprise in a competitive market, Perrier has always been quick to recognize changing consumer tastes and aspirations. From the moment of the commercial launch in 1903, it has believed that selling its product is a matter of marketing an image, a concept. One current advertisement talks about Perrier personifying "Frenchness, style and fun".

The original launch, masterminded by St John Harmsworth, an Englishman who had bought the spring at Vergèze from Dr Louis Perrier, was carefully designed to appeal to the upper and middle classes in France and throughout the British Empire. Clubs and officers' messes were the target — hence the "the Champagne of Table Waters".

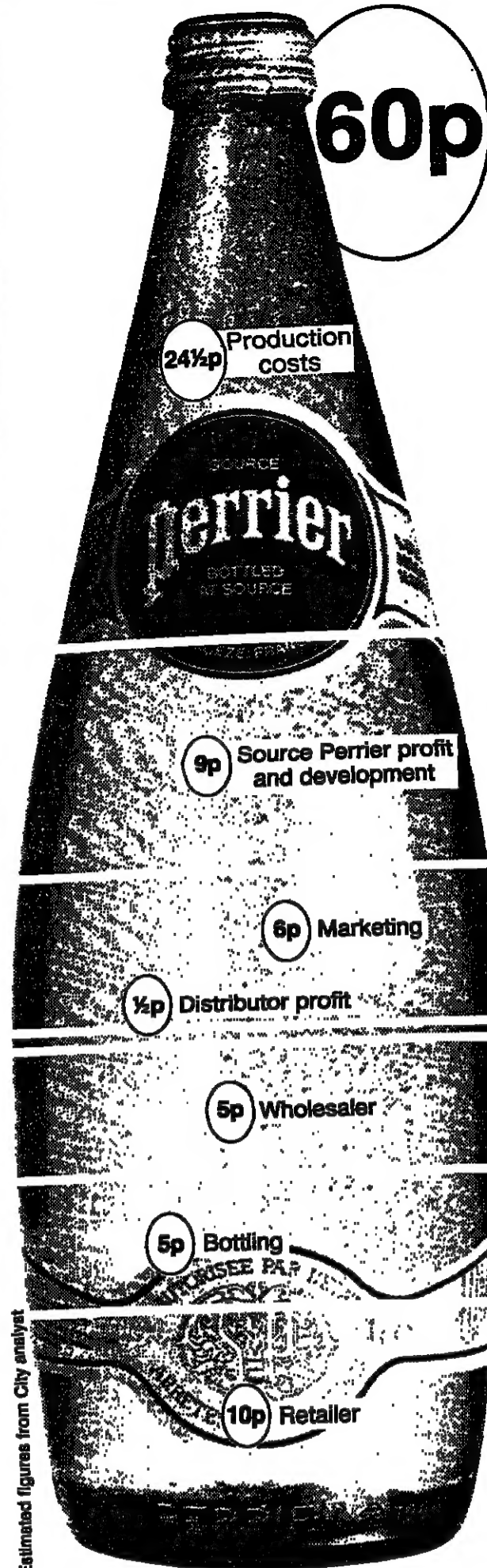
Great thought was also given to the design of the bottle. St John Harmsworth, the brother of Daily Mail founder Lord Northcliffe, wanted a distinctive shape that would stand out anywhere. He eventually modelled a bottle on the Indian clubs he used for exercising, but gave it a more graceful neck. Since then, astute marketing and aggressive advertising has been the hallmark of the Perrier operation.

In Britain, through its advertising agency Leo Burnett, it has been responsible for one of the most successful television advertising campaigns. Based on the "Eau" theme, it has led the way in food and drink marketing. "H2Eau" and "Piscasseau" adverts have encouraged consumers to buy, while at the same time displaying a pleasing wit.

Advertising experts, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, believe that Perrier will be able to continue with the theme. "Once the new supplies have come in, I expect them to advertise heavily," said Simon Taylor, strategy director of Ogilvy & Mather public relations. "I don't see why they should not continue with the adverts but they will have to review them carefully to make sure there is nothing in them which could remind consumers of the benzene scare."

Taylor, who specializes in advising firms on crisis management, believes that Perrier can weather the problem as long as it is quick to keep the public informed about the contamination. "The key thing is to be truthful from the start. They must not go into the bunker. At the moment they seem to be doing everything right."

In America, *The New York Times* devoted an editorial to a comparison between Exxon and Perrier last week, and praised Perrier's approach. "A company that respects the public's growing concerns for human health and the environment serves society and itself," the newspaper said. "A company that appears to treat



Putting a fizz in the balance sheet: how Perrier makes its profit from a bottle of water sold for 60p at a typical supermarket

back on the shelves and maybe longer before a new advertising campaign has been devised, the company has no plans to concentrate harder on marketing its lesser known waters, Buxton, Volvic, Vichy, Contrexville, and San Pellegrino.

But the marketing and financial implications, big news on the Bourse and in Madison Avenue, passed more or less without comment in the Café des Sports. Its ramifications seem very far away down the depths of Provence, where Perrier drinkers of whatever nationality would stick out like a sore thumb.

one we take the gas and throw the water away. From the other, we take the water and throw the gas away. Then here we re-integrate the two to produce Perrier."

There is a rational explanation for such extravagant ingenuity: the water in its original effervescent state has too many bubbles — 3.5 litres of gas to one litre of water. To prevent the bottle exploding, the bubbles are redistributed: nature must be supplemented by art.

The factory tourist is not allowed to see the source itself. Jean-Pierre Leenhardt, Perrier's export manager, led me into the garden of a nearby château containing a circular pavilion. It was here, he assured me, that Perrier sprang from the earth and was piped directly into the up against it and peered within. The frosted glass walls were as smooth and opaque as the alien monolith in 2001. I couldn't see a thing. I couldn't even hear a gurgle.

Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher, once observed: "You want to get back from the supplement to the source, but you are forced to recognize that there is nothing but supplement against it. I can't help wondering if he once visited the Source Perrier."

Andy Martin

## TOWN IN A BOTTLE

Last month, I went on a Perrier pilgrimage to Vergèze, just south of Nîmes in Provence. I arrived on a Saturday; the gates of the bottling factory were closed until Monday. Reaching Nîmes and the Tartier O. Delices in the Place aux Herbes in Nîmes, I ordered a Perrier to wash down my *tarte aux poires crème d'ananas* and was regarded with disdain. "One does not drink Perrier à midi. It is *trop gazeux*," One drinks Badoit," said the owner.

At dinner, in La Belle Respire, tucked away off the shady Rue de l'Étoile, I ordered Perrier. The patron frowned and brought me Badoit. It was as if, even in January, the French already knew something was up.

Behind the green gates of the Source Perrier, emblazoned with the mystic letters SP, the bottling factory is a model of hushed automation. At one end of the immense green palace, sand is pumped in and molten sheaves of glass squirt out of an oven at the rate of 120,000 an hour; at the other, they emerge rinsed, filled, tapped, labelled, boxed, mackintoshed in polythene, crated and finally entrained — all virtually untouched by human hand.

Courteous robots on wheels with photo-electric beacons for noses waltz armies of bottles across the floor. They are programmed

never to bump into one another.

Perrier quarries its own sand, manufactures its own caps, labels, and cardboard for packaging, and began making its own bottles in 1973. Vergèze now produces 20 per cent of the nation's glass and boasts the only factory in the world to combine glassworks and bottling plant under one roof: from start to finish, the transformation of sand into Perrier takes just five hours. It is this high level of efficiency that enabled the company to increase its production from 20 million bottles in 1948 to 1.2 billion in 1989.

The revolving vat where Perrier is injected into the bottles is fed by two pipes. "Both pipes reach deep down into the earth," the factory guide said. "From



Water joke: the Perrier touch

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## FRIDAY PAGE

# 'Every now and then, human beings reach for the sun in a profound way'

As far as one can tell from television accounts, Nelson Mandela listens intently. He seems to be trying to find his bearings. It is the closest we've seen, I should think, to a Rip Van Winkle.

When Mandela was put to sleep, Khrushchev was still in power, the Tonkin Gulf resolution had not taken place, nor the Prague Spring, nor the momentous Civil Rights legislation of 1964 in the United States. He would have seen nothing of Brezhnev, the demagogic hysteria of Cultural Revolution, or Pol Pot.

To emerge from the dark after such a hellish long time requires a little period of adjustment, even for a very quick and clever man such as he. Just to take one obvious example, the upheavals in Eastern Europe need to be seen in the context of a 35-year struggle against Communism since the twentieth Party Congress. Still, this extraordinary man seems to be learning at a galloping rate.

But are we in the West learning? After listening to the acrimonious exchanges in the House of Commons this week, one simply despairs. This is a week in which we have seen the white South African government do what we thought was beyond hope: namely, acknowledge that within a few years, South Africa would no

longer be ruled by a white majority; accept that there would be no more elections for whites only; legalize dozens of political parties and groups sworn to destroy the very government legalizing them; and finally, set Mandela free. The point is not that this is all decades overdue, which it is; the point is that a new president, only a year in power, has let the genie of black majority rule out of the bottle, and South Africa can never be the same again.

Why on earth has de Klerk done this? Why is he trying to dismantle apartheid? Why is he legalizing parties committed to destroying every institution that props up his regime? When asked these questions (as he was this week on American television), his answers are oblique. But I think one has to assume that he is a man of some decency and, as Nelson Mandela put it, integrity. He also understands that this period in history is a rotten one for tyranny. Just as the spirit of self-deter-

mination swept Europe in 1848, so a great yearning for liberty swept the world in 1989. These waves in history can be reduced to all sorts of explanations, but in the end they are irresistible. Just as monarchs tried to stand in their way in 1848, so the odd tyranny — in China or Albania — will survive, temporarily, in 1990. But history always throws up the men who try to harness change in a relatively peaceful manner, and so far we have seen two such men — Mikhail Gorbachev and F.W. de Klerk.

The motives of such men may be mixed. They are not all of a piece. They may want to retain as much power and privilege for their own group or party as they can. They most certainly want to avoid massive bloodshed, and make the transition as painless for everyone as possible. They exist, however, only because the times allow them to do so. The policies of President de Klerk would have turned to dust and ashes in his mouth had



BARBARA AMIEL

he tried them before 1989. Until very recently, it would have been utterly suicidal for the whites in South Africa to have let go and negotiated with the African National Congress.

The reasons for this are straight-

forward: till now, the very legitimate demands of the ANC to end apartheid had come packaged in Communist brutality and radicalism. Now that the world has been able to see the sheer horror of this applied Marxism, there is some hope for creating a free and prosperous South Africa.

Today, the ANC may greet each other with raised fists and a salutation of "power", but Marxism's virulence has, for the moment, passed. As it is, there are two strands in the ANC, if you strip away all of the banners and rhetoric. There is that strand that coincides with the ideas of every decent person in the world, namely, the notion of racial equality and full civil rights. Then there is the second strand, which is preaching black dominance, black racism and Marxist-Leninism.

The first is a perfectly benign strand, and it was criminal and foolish to resist it. The second is a deadly strand, the dominance of which is guaranteed to make

South Africa into a worse society than it has ever been. One can only hope that its poisoned fangs have been taken out by recent events in the rest of the world. The key now is with which strand Nelson Mandela allies himself. Will he be a force for good or bad? There is every reason to believe, on the basis of his very quick recognition of the circumstances, that he is likely to ally himself with the good strand rather than the bad. In which case, there is some hope for South Africa. Otherwise, no matter which side wins, all is lost.

The responsibility of the rest of the world, of course, is to encourage the best impulses in both Mandela and de Klerk. One is almost embarrassed to outline these matters, which seem so self-evident. But after listening to the mud-slinging between Labour and Conservatives in the Commons this week, perhaps it is necessary. The names de Klerk, Gorbachev and Mandela are not

absolute synonyms for good or bad. They are simply names. At best, they are descriptive terms for policies. What makes sense is a show of support for each name to match every concession they make. The ANC must be encouraged to rid itself of extreme Marxist demands that Britain's Labour Party has long put to rest. De Klerk must be encouraged, by a graduated removal of sanctions, to continue the steps forward. Sanctions can always be reapplied for bad behaviour.

Party politics are a fact of life and I suppose we shall see the leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister baring each other, no matter what the issue. But every now and then, perhaps a hundred or more years apart, human beings reach for the sun in the most profound way. A true democracy is a profoundly good institution, one that is in all our interests, not least of all because I cannot think of a single occasion in which two liberal or social democracies have gone to war against each other. Nothing reduces conflict in the world more than a system in which the people run their own affairs. It would be an eclipse of the human condition to see South Africa exchange white Fascism for black Fascism. Couldn't Westminster and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, just for once, put everything else aside?

## With this cop-out I thee wed . . .

**From Onassis to Trump, premarital contracts set marriage's rules — except in England. Victoria McKee reports**

The real-life soap opera scheduled to hit New York's television divorce courts shortly, starring Donald and Ivana Trump, has one theme, besides that of the eternal triangle, which is becoming increasingly relevant to Britain.

The premarital contract, which he believes to be his trump card, is still relatively unknown here, and virtually unenforceable. But the Law Society's matrimonial law committee has just been examining the case for premarital contracts, and is recommending a proposal that the law be reconsidered to make them a more attractive proposition for anyone entering a marriage of true minds, but unequal assets.

In addition, the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers is debating whether to urge the harmonization of international laws on premarital contracts. Many members of this organization of elite matrimonial lawyers from Britain, the Continent and North America, believe the harmonization is necessary, because of the increasing incidence of "mixed" marriages between people of different countries, and the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of divorce.

Donald Trump is the billionaire property developer whose wife and supposed professional partner ("supposed", because she supposed she was, although he now claims she wasn't) could have

demanded a sizable chunk of his riches, under New York's "equitable distribution" laws. But because of a pre-nuptial agreement, which the Trumps updated every few years, she should get a divorce settlement of less than \$20 million (\$11.8 million) — plus only one of their three luxury homes and no share of the Trump business empire.

"There's not very much regard in England for the premarital contract," says Peter Grose-Hodge, an officer of the IAML, and a member of the Law Society's matrimonial law committee. "But, as the social climate changes, and professional women earn good salaries, the courts are looking more kindly at reasonable premarital agreements."

"They are a fact of life in most Continental countries, and in Scandinavia they are strictly enforceable. In France every marriage has, in effect, a premarital contract because people have to elect whether to be married under joint or separate property agreements. Under Scottish law premarital agreements are now one of the factors which a court must take into consideration. England is lagging behind."

The matrimonial law committee is only in favour of such contracts provided certain safeguards have been

attached, Grose-Hodge explains. "It is being argued that premarital agreements would not be looked at unless both parties had been independently advised after full disclosure of all assets, as is the case in Canada. We would also say that unless the agreement makes provision for the birth of a child, that should annul it."

Under New York state law — and each state in the United States is a law unto itself when it comes to marriage and divorce — premarital agreements are "legal and binding, like any other contract," according to Fern Shier Sussman, executive secretary of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, "unless fraud or non-disclosure can be proved."

Sussman emphasizes that "under equitable distribution the female spouse usually ends up with less than a third of the property, not half as under California's community property laws."

"The Trump case is particularly fascinating, because it is a parody of the situation that too often affects ordinary women who have worked all their married lives in their husbands' business and suddenly find themselves with no job, very little money and no salary history which will en-

able them to get another job." Ivana Trump used to boast that her salary, when her husband created her president of the Plaza Hotel, was only \$1 a year and all the dresses she could buy. Grose-Hodge believes it is irrelevant that her salary was only \$1 a year, as "her husband paid all the bills anyway".

But Sussman argues differently. "Enormous wealth can mask an issue that, to women in less favourable financial circumstances, is very important. Wives should make sure they get a fair wage for the work they do for their husbands, so they can accrue money in their own name and have a measure of their worth for the courts to judge."

Margaret Bennett, a family law solicitor and an officer of the IAML, agrees with Sussman in principle. But, she says, if Ivana Trump was her client she would be heartened by the possibility of being able to break the contract, partly because of the derisory dollar-a-year salary. "That to me would seem to indicate that her husband must have allowed her to believe she was his partner. If a man had taken the dollar salary everyone would clearly have believed they were partners."

Perhaps the most famous premarital contract was that between Jacqueline Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis, which limited her share of his mooted multi-billion pound estate to a share in a \$20 million trust fund and just under £1 million from his will. She appeared content with the



A marriage made in settlement? Jacqueline Kennedy wed Aristotle Onassis — and a multi-million pound premarital contract

deal — £1 million went a lot further back then — but more recently it has become the custom to contest premarital contracts.

Judge Jacqueline Silbermann, the Manhattan Su-

preme Court judge who presided over the recent William Hurt "palimony" trial, attacked "the appraisers who are making a fortune out of valuing assets", and asserted that "what used to be emo-

tional wrangles have turned into commercial wrangles which may be easier to adjudicate, but make marriage a cold business".

However, Grose-Hodge believes that premarital con-

tracts would eventually simplify the process of divorce. "People say it's just lawyers making more business for themselves," he says, "but in the end it would cut out a lot of the nastiness."

### Power play in four suits

There may be less glamour in the world of bridge than among international chess players — but there's more money in it. Some of the richest men on earth are

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### Whale of a title

Heathcote Williams's evocative elegy, *Whale Nation*, has already alerted many people to the crisis facing the world's largest mammal. It has been published in book form and performed at sell-out readings around the country by Williams himself, and actor Roy Hutchins. Now the epic poem — which first conjures up the relaxed, playful lifestyle of the whale and then moves to a shocking description of how many meet their doom — is available on cassette and compact disc, recited by Hutchins. *Whale Nation* is available on the Discotique label at £6 on cassette and £7.50 on compact disc. For the same price (plus £1.90 for postage and packing), the recitation can be bought through the Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society, 20 West Lea Road, Bath, Avon BA1 3RL.

### Heat for home

Having trouble finding a way to heat your home with solar power? The Women's Environmental Network and the Centre for Alternative Technology have the answer: learn to build your own heating system on a residential weekend course (February 23-25) at the centre's headquarters in Wales. Visitors will learn about the centre's work, take a guided tour of the displays of wind, solar and water power, and experience the realities of low-energy buildings and organic gardening. There are also lectures on homeopathy, suggestions for children's environmental projects, and slide shows. The Women's Weekend programme of the centre's residential courses; for details, contact the centre at Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ (0654 2400).

### ECOSPHERE

News on environmental issues

### A plot for life

Self-sufficiency is popular once again — and even town-dwellers are discovering that "the good life" isn't an impossible quest. With the help of "The Forest Garden", a new booklet, even small plots can be transformed with species of fruit and nut trees, fruit bushes and climbers, perennials and medicinal herbs, creating a self-regulating ecosystem which, after about two years, requires minimum maintenance. Everything recommended has been chosen for self-fertilization, self-watering, self-mulching, self-pollinating and self-healing. The booklet, complete with a list of plant suppliers, is available by mail for £2.50 from the Institute of Social Inventions, 24 Albercorn Place, London NW8 9XP.

### Tissue issue

Expect to be collared in your local high street tomorrow by Friends of the Earth supporters keen to instil in consumers the idea that buying recycled paper for the home isn't as environmentally friendly as it seems. The "Recycled Paper Day of Action" focuses on "the tissue issue" — the fact that most recycled toilet paper is made from high-quality paper pulp (requiring office and computer paper, which are in scant supply), rather than the lower standard generated from recycled newspapers. It observes: "The grade of paper used in toilet paper production is of a much higher quality than is necessary or appropriate for

something that is going to go straight down the pan." FoE's advice is to look for off-white recycled paper, generally available at health food outlets, although "natural" rolls are available in bulk (price £8.70 for 36 rolls) through Tradecraft, Kingsway, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE11 0NE. Write for a catalogue, or phone 091 491051.

### Green teeth?

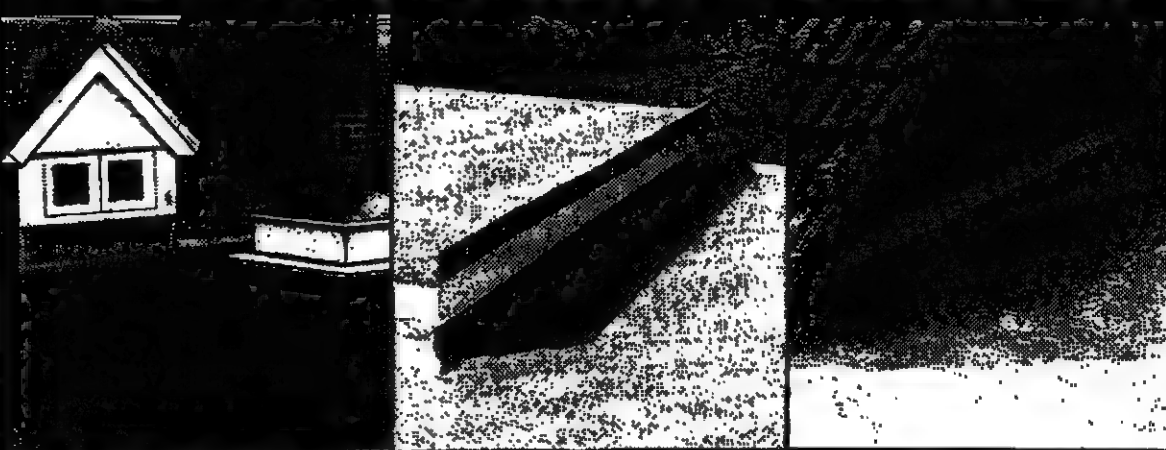
Most toothpaste brands sold in the UK contain artificial flavourings, colourings, sweeteners and preservatives. They may also have been tested on animals. However, manufacturers aren't obliged by law to make any of these disclosures on their packaging. Kingfisher Natural Toothpaste is a natural, cruelty-free brand now available through branches of Asda, Safeway and Sainsbury, as well as the usual health food store outlets. Priced at 94p for 50ml or £1.77 for 125ml, the toothpaste comes in mint, lemon and fennel flavour.

### Can plan

Each year, Britons get through six billion cans of drinks — most of which, when empty, go straight in the dustbin. Yet many householders who trot off dutifully with waste papers and bottles still have trouble finding a skip in which to deposit steel and aluminium cans, enabling these valuable resources to be recovered by industry. The Can Makers' information service has published a booklet, "Are You Green About Recycling?", which explains collection schemes up and down the country, and helps readers locate their nearest skip or recovery centre. Send an SAE to The Can Makers, 36 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0EB for the free booklet.

Josephine Fairley

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# TIMES DIARY

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

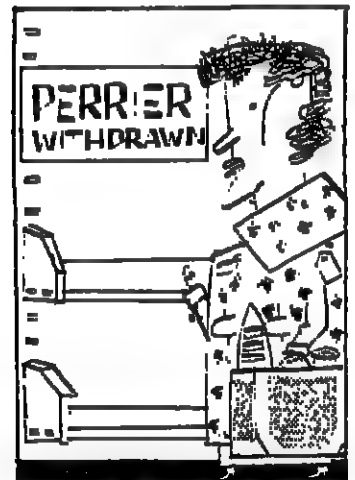
A book to be published next week will reveal for the first time the names of the shadowy men and women behind Labour's slick advertising effort of recent years, long a subject of speculation in agency circles. When Labour began to plan its strategy for the last general election, it quickly realized it did not have the cash to employ a top-flight agency to rival the Tories' Saatchi and Saatchi. It employed Philip Gould, a young and sympathetic communications expert, to put together a "Shadow Communications Agency" of media and advertising professionals who would give their services free of charge. It was later calculated that Labour's use of such free advice saved the party more than £500,000 at the last election, and the same method is likely to reap an even bigger saving next time.

The book, *Labour Rebuilt*, by my press gallery colleagues Patrick Wintour and Colin Hughes, reveals that the advertising team included Peter Herd, Alan Till and Paul Lees from the agency Boase Massimi Pollitt, which ran Ken Livingstone's anti-abortion campaign at the GLC, Richard Faulkner of Westminster Communications, Leslie Butterfield of the Abbott Meade Vickers agency, and Colin Fisher of the Strategic Research Unit. Most influential of the lot, however, is probably the former managing director of Boase Massimi Pollitt, Chris Powell. But then, he comes from an influential family. His brother, Charles, works in Downing Street as private secretary to Margaret Thatcher.

If Perrier is no longer fit to drink, what price London tap water? Labour's David Blunkett reports that for some time his guide dog, Offa, has been feeling distinctly unwell during walks, when parliamentarily duties require his presence in the capital. When the animal returns to Sheffield for the weekend, it immediately perks up again. Blunkett is convinced it is the water and tells me that he has this week been offering the dog bowls of milk instead. He is now threatening to start importing canisters of pure Yorkshire into London when he travels down on Monday mornings.

Neil Thorne, the Conservative MP for Ilford South, yesterday reported back from his visit to Romania under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Romanians, he said, were very excited at the prospect of free elections on May 20 and the opportunity to elect their leaders. But Thorne fears, many have still not fully grasped what it means to live in a democracy. Several he spoke to innocently assumed that they were electing a government to serve for the next 40 years.

BARRY FANTONI



"Envoys reacting"

The release of Nelson Mandela last Sunday proved timely for Ashok Kumar, who on the same day became the first new black candidate selected by the Labour Party since the last general election. Kumar was chosen to fight the marginal seat of Langbaurgh in Cleveland, currently held by the Tory MP Richard Holt, with a majority of just 2,000. He won the vote by the narrowest of margins, and party members are convinced the emotion of the day contributed to the decision. The move has delighted black campaigners, who had begun to despair of a single black candidate being chosen before the next election. They point out that at three by-elections in this Parliament, Kensington, Vauxhall and now Mid Staffordshire, Labour has dropped a black candidate who had either fought the seat at the previous election or been the favoured choice of local party members.

The Conservative Friends of The Morning Star is, perhaps, one of the more unlikely pressure groups to be found at Westminster, but I learn that Tory MPs John Biffen and Edward Leigh have joined the campaign to raise £150,000 to save the Communist newspaper, which is in dire financial straits since the Kremlin slashed its bulk order. Meanwhile, Tory MP Nicholas Bennett has amended a Labour motion of support for the paper to urge upon it a greater understanding of market forces. What he doesn't say is that his grandfather was features editor in the days when the paper was *The Daily Worker*.

Last evening, I had an intimation of immortality.

It was not, I'm afraid, a *premier grand cru* intimation, it was not a sight of that immortal sea which brought us hither, it was not even a high instinct before which my mortal nature did tremble like a guilty thing surprised, because in order to experience these, one must, as you know, have a faith that looks through death, and as I have a faith which has its work cut out focusing on next Tuesday, I have long given up the ambition of literal immortality. But that does not mean that I do not hanker, like many of us, after a little nominal imperishability, while I have come reluctantly to accept that when I lie a-mouldering in the grave, nothing will go marching on, I should nevertheless like to fix it for some small remnant to potter about a bit.

It is impossible not to feel the most acute sympathy for Chris Patten. The game of "pass the poll-tax parcel" has been long and tortuous. But the music has stopped and the Environment Secretary has a time-bomb ticking in his lap. He had no part in lighting the fuse, but the fizzing of the fuse before the detonation can now be heard as the forecast figures of the community charge start to surface.

The full force of explosion, however, will not come until next month, when the first community charge bills start to fall through letter boxes. He must be bending all his efforts at the moment to trying to temper the events that will follow.

Is there anything at all that can be done at this late stage? Certainly, we can expect no further concessions from the Treasury; John Major has more than enough problems already. In any case, to throw another billion or two on top of the £4 billion the Government has already made available to soften the worst effects of the charge would be simply to throw good money after bad. Public resentment of a tax which will be from about £300 to £600 per head will certainly not be softened by a sop

Michael Mates advises an eleventh-hour change of policy

## Defusing the poll tax bomb

of £30 or £40, while releasing more spending power simply makes harder the already difficult task of bringing down inflation.

The problem is that virtually no local authority will be able to match the Government's stated targets, largely because they were based on an inflation rate of 4 per cent, which everyone knows is pie in the sky.

So it is not just a question of local authorities overspending, although there is no doubt that some have taken the opportunity of a change in the system to hide unwarranted extra expenditure behind a new and unfamiliar charge, reckoning that the Government will bear the odium for introducing the new tax, rather than they for overspending. In this judgement they are probably right. In any case, by legislation passed in the last year, central government has forced extra expenditure on local authorities without any compensating in-

crease in central grant. Local management of schools, which will be expensive to implement initially, is but one such example of many.

Now the Government proposes a system of community-charge capping of the highest spending councils, similar to the rate-capping experiment. Had rate capping been as successful as the Government hoped, there would have been much less reason to abolish the rating system in the first place. But it did not work. Even the draconian Scottish legislation did not work. The Secretary of State for Scotland was given precise powers to fix the exact level of expenditure of every Scottish authority — he could go as far as forcing them to refund excess rates — but even this attempt to control local expenditure was insufficient.

The problem with capping the community charge is that the more strictly it is imposed the

more the Government may be exposed to lengthy and expensive challenges in the courts. In addition, if an overspending council's charge is capped — reduced, say, from £600 to £500 — the Government implicitly concedes that the lower charge is acceptable, so underwrites it as a starting point for future years.

The logic underlying the community charge is theoretically impeccable: everyone should contribute to the local services that we enjoy, so that domestic ratepayers and the business community are not unfairly discriminated against. The introduction of a universal charge brings full accountability; and, above all, it exposes high-spending, left-wing Labour councils for the wastrels they are.

The fundamental unfairness of a flat-rate charge was, at the outset, seen as the essential ingredient to make the urban poor think before voting. But those were the heady days of

rhetoric. The bluntness of the injustice being done to the disadvantaged and to the poorest of the poor forced the Government to make its first concessions. Then came the phasing, the safety-nets and subventions from the Exchequer. We are on a slippery slope, and level ground not yet in sight.

The community cannot be trusted with the community charge. Far from not understanding what it is all about but accepting the argument of justice and accountability, the community understands all too well what is going on, has a distinct feeling of unease that it is not fair, and is laying the blame squarely at the door not of the local authorities who are raising the tax, but of the Government which invented it.

There is still time to salvage the Government's reputation. As I argued in these columns last month, one way to do this is to bear some of the burden cen-

trally. There is now a strong tide of feeling on the Tory benches that supports transfer of some or all of education financing away from local authorities. Provided that all the savings are passed on to the community-charge payers, this need not be inflationary, and might bring the charge down to a reasonable level. Indeed, there is an important point here about inflation: the community charge will add about 1 per cent to the Retail Prices Index. Increase in central taxation adds nothing.

Of one thing I am certain: to do nothing is not an option.

All of us grumble about our taxes; that is only human nature. But we are a law-abiding nation and we pay our car tax, or television licence fees — even our VAT — because, having grumbled, we acknowledge that they are, by and large, reasonable. What is worrying is that so many people believe that this latest tax is set at an unreasonable level, and that it is unfair in its implementation.

There is more resentment about this tax than about any policy that has gone before. The Government will ignore the growing anger at its peril. The author is Conservative MP for Hampshire East.

## Beware the bear in retreat

James Sherr argues that troop reductions in the Warsaw Pact do not eliminate the need for a strong Western military alliance

Are the tribulations of the Warsaw Pact part of a strategy, or simply a débâcle? Has Mikhail Gorbachev been manipulating events or capitulating to them? When today's confusion dissipates, tomorrow's verdict is likely to be that Gorbachev abandoned his clients with forethought and calculation. This verdict is dangerously simplistic.

An orderly withdrawal from Eastern Europe might have served Soviet interests, but today the Soviet Union is being routed. It is losing not only its clients, but its ability to control events. What is more, Gorbachev has received nothing in return. Nato may collapse, but it has not yet. And an "all-European security order" has neither been secured nor promised. None of this can be by design. Until last year, Gorbachev always gambled flamboyantly with what he could afford to lose, so it made sense to speak of his strategy. Today we must speak of its failure.

This failure is threefold. First, Gorbachev's intra-bloc policy has fallen to pieces. Gorbachev's initial aim was not to liquidate the Warsaw Pact, but to revitalize it. For at least two decades, the Soviet Union had been subsidizing its neighbours with cheap raw materials, settling for third-rate manufactured goods in return. Costly as this was, the Soviet Union tolerated it as the price for stability in Eastern Europe. By the early 1980s, it was clear that this arrangement had profited no one.

Gorbachev's solution to the problem was double-edged. On

the one hand, he gave his clients leave to diverge from Soviet models and methods; on the other, he demanded economic results. New schemes to integrate Soviet and East European enterprises were imposed, but in the absence of massive Western assistance and meaningful economic reform, integration merely bound the bait to the blind. The policy was bound to end in disaster, and it has. The upheavals of 1989 are the legacy of the more permissive political environment fostered by Gorbachev's policy, and of the more strenuous economic conditions it brought.

These upheavals were the fruit of Gorbachev's strategy to restructure East-West relations, the second area of failure. This project rested on the premise that the "image of the enemy" was essential to Nato's cohesion. Yet the same has always been true of the Warsaw Pact. Indeed, for the populations who bear the burden of these alliances, the enemy is the same: the Soviet Union. The difference between the alliances is not the identity of the enemy, but the nature of the threat. Historically, Nato's cohesion has rested on a fear of war and Soviet invasion, while the Warsaw Pact has survived through fear of repression and armed Soviet intervention.

Thanks to Gorbachev's "new thinking", the threats have lost credibility. To the Western public, Gorbachev has come to symbolize liberalization and peace. But East Europeans were never so idealistic. To them, Gorbachev merely symbolized retrenchment, the primacy of domestic politics, and the need



for Western assistance. The Soviet shift to a less provocative military doctrine — the force reductions and the onset of the conventional arms talks — confirmed this impression. The shift away from militarism also confirmed that a return to armed intervention would wreck Gorbachev's idea of a common European home, and take *perestroika* down with it. In the words of a Polish dissident, "modern technology has become more important to the Soviet Union than Poland is".

But Soviet clients were not abandoned simply in a fit of "new thinking". The third factor in the recent changes is that upheaval in Eastern Europe coincided with upheaval in the Soviet Union itself. Leonid Abalkin, the deputy prime min-

ister and Gorbachev's confidant, recently stated that "events in Vorkuta [the Soviet mining centre] concern us more than events in Berlin". And well they might. But few Leninists — and few who understand Russian history — would take on an external foe at a time when the "stability of the rear" is in doubt.

In sum, the Soviet Union is withdrawing from Eastern Europe because it must, not (as Russians put it) "for the sake of our blue eyes". For the time being, internal Soviet interests not only take precedence over external ones, but obscure them. But these external interests may resurface. A future Soviet leadership may act on different calculations of costs and benefits from those that

Gorbachev has so far followed. What disciplines are needed to maintain this cost-benefit analysis in Europe's interests?

The first is the preservation of Nato as a serious military alliance. Military threats take time to counter. What is more, they are not absolute, but relative. Troop withdrawals will diminish threats, but not eliminate them. The Russians themselves have sought partial reductions in these forces, because the reach and accuracy of modern weapons makes all deployment very risky. Yet modern weapons also make forces very mobile. Long before their withdrawal was even mooted, Soviet tank divisions were expected to be able to travel 300-400 kilometres a day with all their equipment and arrive ready to fight.

Five times as much warning of Soviet attack will avail us little if our preparation time has increased by a factor of 10. The issue, therefore, is not whether we reduce defence spending, but how we reduce it. There is much to be said for reducing forces levels at present, but it would be folly to tear up the foundations of our defences by design or by default.

Our second goal must be to support those in Eastern Europe who are seeking to recover their military sovereignty. This enterprise is almost as vital to us as to them. The Warsaw Pact is not a mechanism for keeping Soviet troops in Eastern Europe, but for subordinating East European military establishments to the Soviet Union. Outside Romania, no Warsaw Pact government has exercised full control over its armed forces, and no Warsaw Pact army has been capable of defending its own country. Unless the new governments can exercise control of their own military installations, infrastructure and communications — and the loyalty of security forces and military commanders — the withdrawal of Soviet troops will have little military significance.

For these reasons, Moscow's call for the "politicization" of the two alliances should be treated with less rapture and more caution than hitherto. Nato performs a vital military function. The Warsaw Pact, by contrast, is simply an instrument for limiting sovereignty. As such, it has always had a political character. It will not help the cause of democracy in Eastern Europe if the Soviet Union persuades Nato to equate alliances that are not equivalent and to legitimize what is illegitimate. It might not help the cause of stability or security either.

The author is Lecturer in International Relations at Lincoln College, Oxford.

## War issues an ugly invitation in Kashmir

Karan Thapar on the pressure pushing India and Pakistan to fight

The Indian and Pakistani war of words over Kashmir has in the past week escalated into armed skirmishes. Thousands of Pakistani Kashmiris have attempted to cross the border to assist the separatist struggle of their brothers in India. The Pakistanis regard them as Mujahidin guerrillas for the Muslim cause, and do not attempt to stop them. The Indians see them as infiltrators encouraged by Islamabad, and open fire. On at least two occasions, such incidents have led to direct and continuous — albeit limited — shooting between soldiers from each side.

Exchanges of fire between Indian and Pakistani troops are neither uncommon nor necessarily a precursor of something worse (they are common, for example, in the icy heights of the Siachen glacier), but in the present circumstances, with minority governments and inflamed public opinion in both countries, they may be a dangerous portent. Is an Indo-

Pakistan war becoming inevitable?

Benazir Bhutto is at present walking a political tightrope. Her government is considered by people to be ineffective after 14 months in office, excluding amendments and repeals, it has passed only one piece of legislation, the June budget. Worse, it has lost ground to the opposition and been damaged by the accusation that it is soft on India.

The Kashmir issue provides an escape and a solution. After all, no government in Pakistan can ignore the trouble in Kashmir or the opportunity it gives to rescind the disputed accession of Kashmir to India in 1947, when Pakistan took over part of the region. By riding the crest of public opinion, Miss Bhutto can deflect attention from other problems. Domestic pressure is thus pushing her to take a strong stand, including, according to some reports, sanctuaries in

Pakistan for India's Kashmiri separatists, and the encouragement of the support offered by Pakistan's Kashmiris. Last week's skirmishes were not only a product of this policy, but a demonstration to the Pakistani people that the Bhutto government is doing all it can.

Yet outright war will not suit Miss Bhutto. The military balance between India and Pakistan suggests that her army probably could not win. More critically, such a conflict could give the generals an upper hand over her civilian government, thus undermining her standing in the country and exacerbating Pakistan's internal ethnic troubles.

However, it is far from clear that this sublimely is appreciated in New Delhi. There, Pakistan's political posture is interpreted as support for — even encouragement of — Kashmiri separatism. The existence of separatist sanctuaries on the Pakistan side, and

the smuggling of arms into India, are increasingly identified as stoking the fires in the state. Even though the Indian government accepts that the origins of the problem in Kashmir are domestic, the more it resists internal solution, the more it is likely that outside interference will be blamed.

In these circumstances, V.P. Singh, the Indian Prime Minister, might allow himself to be "provoked" into a larger conflict. The Indian army is bigger, stronger and probably better equipped than that of Pakistan. A quick, easy victory would smash whatever support Pakistan gives the Kashmiri separatists (not to mention Sikh separatists), and for Singh it would be a political triumph, on the strength of which he could call a snap election with every likelihood of winning an outright majority. At the moment, Singh's Janata Dal party has

fewer than 150 MPs in the 529-seat Lok Sabha, and is dependent upon both Communists and Hindu chauvinists for support.

No doubt Singh is aware of such possibilities. But he must also be conscious of his government's commitment to improve the living standards of India's rural poor. That task is already bedevilled by a growing budgetary deficit. Ideally, he should be looking to the defence budget for savings. War would further undermine his development plans.

Yet the precarious balance that the two sides are trying to maintain over Kashmir can only become less stable with time. At the moment, Miss Bhutto is abreast of Pakistan's pro-Kashmir sentiment, but if emotions become more excited — as they might well, whether or not the Indians can calm the crisis on their side of the border — she will face a difficult choice. She would

have either to reverse her policy and resist the domestic pressure for further action, or surrender to demands for greater support for Kashmiri separatism. The first course might endanger the survival of her government; the second would lead to war.

For his part, V.P. Singh is at present anxious to avoid conflict, but he cannot allow his minority government to appear weak or reluctant to defend India's borders. And with the Kashmir dispute threatening to exacerbate India's fraught Hindu-Muslim relations, and his Hindu supporters whipping up anti-Pakistan feeling, he may find that his capacity to resist "provocation" from Pakistan is diminished, no matter how personally sympathetic he is to Benazir Bhutto's dilemma. The point may soon come when war will be simpler and politically expedient.

The danger is that repeated border skirmishes might lead to large-scale confrontation, even when neither side wants it.

## My first taste of immortality



ALAN COREN

Cricklewood... but the odds against such coups are unacceptably whim-dependent. No, stick to your last has ever been my motto, even if the result is doomed to be cobblers; and up until last night, therefore, my bids for immortality had always hung on words. Coin a snappy neologism, catch the eye of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and I would live forever. The OUP does not strike people off once in a word — be it ever so subsequently unused — is there for good.

Every year, therefore, I dangle something in front of them. Twice, I have come close: the first, in 1976, was *wassname*; the second, in 1982, *narmean* —

neither one a jewel in the lexical crown perhaps, not a *charlie*, not a *snark*, but items nevertheless that I should be proud to have my name immortally attached to in the OED as onlie beggetter of.

On both occasions, academic inquiries reached me as to their provenance, public appearances, all that; but nothing came of it.

Two Tuesdays ago, here in *The Times*, I cast this year's bait. (Still only February, but why hang about? Now that the OED is computerized on CD-ROM, updating is a doddle; if you had a VDU, you might see yourself immortalized before you could say Jack Wossname.) My new contender was *peripolitan*, a little corker though I says it as shouldn't, and unquestionably a cultural notch or two up on *narmean*.

Nothing much happened. A couple of logomachists wrote in,

prepared, if I may précis their admiration, to meet me behind the London Library bievle shed and beat me to a pulp, but from Oxford, nothing. And then, at 6pm yesterday, the phone rang.

I was fixing drinks at the time. My wife was having a kir, I was having a pink vodka, and I had put the ice in both glasses and splashed the cassis in the one and the angostura in the other when she called from the hall that there was someone on the phone from Oxford asking about *peripolitan*. I was not to be let! *Peripolitan* was the best new word in the world. It had been lying around for 30 centuries, waiting to be coined.

The caller turned out to be some grisly pedant wanting to know what gave me the right, etc. Broken. I shuffled back to the kitchen, sloshed the vodka and the Sancerre into the prepared glasses and passed one to my wife. And she cried: "God almighty!"

I snuffed my own. They really ought to make a cassis a different colour from angostura. But then I tasted it: and with it, immortality. I do not need to find a new word any more. Consider John Collins, portman at Limmer's Hotel, consider Guido Martini, bartender at the Waldorf Astoria, consider James Pimm, oysterateur of Poultry — names now, literally, on every lip.

For vodka with a dash of cassis on the rocks is a very remarkable drink. I urge you to get your teeth around a Bloody Coren tonight. If only to stop him coming up with words like *oysterateur*.

هكذا من الأصل





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## AN UNACCEPTABLE ACCORD

Last month Mr Douglas Hurd told the House of Commons that it would be unacceptable for Britain "simply to find out what China wants and then to do it". But this is exactly what seems to have happened in the making of the agreement reached by Britain and China in Peking this week on the terms of the Basic Law.

On all important issues, it is China's determination to prevent the emergence of democratic government which has prevailed. The Government has ignored the recommendations of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons that all members of Hong Kong's 60-member Legislative Council be directly elected by 1995. Worse, it has failed to insist on the more modest timetable proposed by the council's members: the direct election of a third of its members next year, half in 1995 and a written commitment by Peking to the election of two-thirds in 1999 and all by 2003.

Instead, Britain has accepted China's suggestion of extremely limited increases, only a third of the council directly elected by 1997 and no assurance that the proportion of elected members will ever rise above half. Negotiation has made only a marginal difference to the hardened position which Peking adopted since last June. Britain has, furthermore, agreed that the Chief Executive who will replace the British Governor in 1997 will be picked by an electoral college which Peking will control.

The Government could have declined to discuss the numbers to be directly elected in 1995. It could, more robustly, have informed China that under the 1985 Sino-British Joint Declaration, Britain had the right and duty to decide on Hong Kong's form of government. True, after 1997 Peking can overturn what it does not like. But there would have been no breach of the 1984 agreement involved in a British decision to accede to the wishes of Hong Kong's people and let China incur the opprobrium which would accompany any move to dismantle democratic frameworks.

The principle of setting up arrangements commanding permanently sustainable agree-

ment between the two governments (the "smooth train" transition) has instead been allowed to prevail. The only "concessions" obtained in a month of Sino-British negotiation refer to clauses, inserted by Peking since the Tiananmen Square massacre, which further closed the door to democracy.

The original purpose of consultations over the Basic Law was that the wishes of Hong Kong should be taken into account by the drafters. As it stands, the agreed draft will neither establish democratic traditions nor guarantee the separation of powers between executive and legislative. Nor will it secure the independence of the judiciary, without which the formula of "one country, two systems", is completely hollow.

This cannot, if Britain is to honour its proclaimed concern for the lasting freedom and welfare of Hong Kong's people, be the last word. The Government should reconsider its position, and with urgency. The draft, which will be given final form by the Basic Law Drafting Committee in Peking tonight is still exactly that: a draft. It remains a draft until ratified by China's National People's Congress, which meets in plenary session on March 20.

It is by now clear that Britain cannot both meet its duty to Hong Kong and accept the result of the Basic Law negotiation. That message has to be conveyed to the NPC meeting, which must be given to understand—as Mr Hurd has said—that Britain will act unilaterally if necessary. The simplest message would be an announcement that Britain wishes to extend its consultation with the people of Hong Kong by means of a referendum and intends to be guided by the result.

It has been said that the issues and options are too involved for a referendum. Such a vote cannot settle any and every question covered by the Basic Law talks. But it can ask two questions which really matter. Do you want a complete council directly elected? By what date? Both the campaign and result would be an education for all.

## ANGUISH AT SELLAFIELD

The discovery of a clear statistical link between the exposure of men to excessive radiation and leukaemia in their children is a calamity of dreadful proportions for those directly affected. The anguish of a father of a child suffering from this serious and sometimes fatal disease will be increased immeasurably by the suspicion that the origin of such suffering may after all be in himself. Such families need and deserve all the support and sympathy a compassionate society can muster.

So serious are the implications of this discovery that the only sound basis for public policy in response must be to act as if the suspicion was already proved. Further research is essential, but it must not be used as an excuse for delay.

The investigation by Professor Martin Gardner of Southampton University is evidence enough for action. It is already being hailed as a model of its kind, and may become a classic demonstration of the detective power of environmental epidemiology, the science of investigating statistical patterns of disease in pursuit of clues to medical causes and effects.

Because of the nature of the evidence, the exact causal mechanism is still mysterious. Professor Gardner's inquiry was first commissioned when it was noticed that there was a much above average incidence of leukaemia among children living near Sellafield in Cumbria, and it was decided to try to trace the source of it by studying the pattern. In pointing to the possibility of genetic transmission from father to child, the inquiry seems to have eliminated other worrying possibilities, which is some small consolation for the community which lives in the Sellafield area.

The emphasis in further research will now

pass from the statistical to the genetic, to find the exact cause. But enough is known to suggest that it may well result from genetic changes in the male reproductive system caused by exposure to radiation above a certain level, leading to genetic mutation in the sperm in such a way as to reduce resistance to leukaemia in any subsequent offspring.

The implication must be faced, painful though it is, that any man who has been exposed regularly to radiation in the course of his employment may run some risk of fathering children who may eventually contract leukaemia. One of the first priorities of research must be to identify that group at risk as accurately as possible, for there must be thousands of men whose work brings them into contact with radiation who will today be fearful about their own families. They need reassurance as fast as it can be obtained, based on solid scientific investigation.

Meanwhile the entire nuclear industry is faced with a real emergency. Radiation safety levels will have to be reviewed once again, and almost certainly substantially lowered. This is also a case where it will not be sufficient to await the final dotted "i" or crossed "t" in the laboratory, but where the only right basis to proceed for the time being will be to assume the worst.

This first hard evidence of an association of leukaemia with the Sellafield plant will do no good for the reputation of the nuclear industry at all. Safety controls and procedures are already very tight, yet obviously still not tight enough. The public will need a great deal of reassurance before it is convinced that this is the last hole in the nuclear safety net still needing to be closed.

## MAKING UP WITH BUENOS AIRES

"You should do everything", Lord Chesterfield said, "in minutest time". The diplomatic dance between London and Buenos Aires over the last eight years has certainly been slow, but it has more often seemed crab-like than stately. It was decided yesterday in Madrid that diplomatic relations should be restored and that the 150-mile protection zone around the Falkland Islands should be scaled down. The prospects are therefore better than for some time for the dance to continue in triple time.

Britain and Argentina will now exchange ambassadors, and that will be to the advantage of the financial and business communities in both countries. Scheduled air services between London and Buenos Aires were restarted last month, and Argentinian merchant ships have been able to sail through the protection zone without permission since the beginning of the year.

Yesterday's news will be received with relief in Washington, with uneasiness in Port Stanley and with satisfaction in Buenos Aires. The agreement does, indeed, represent a considerable diplomatic success for President Menem. When he was running for president, his campaign rhetoric, with its references to "the need to spill blood" over the Falklands "the need to deal of apprehension. Once in office, however, his tone underwent a marked change, and by the middle of last year he was talking of putting the issue of the sovereignty of the Falklands on ice. "We have waited 156 years", he said. "We can certainly wait a bit longer".

President Menem is a realist. He has maintained consistently that his foreign policy would be dictated by his country's need to find export markets and to attract foreign investment. Re-establishing ties with Britain will not mean removing obstacles to trade with the rest of the European Community.

There are economic advantages for this country, too. Britain shares Argentina's in-

terest in fishery conservation in the south-west Atlantic, and the prospect of licences to conduct oil explorations on the ocean floor between Argentina and the Falklands is likely to bring a gleam to the eye of the oil companies. More broadly, the recent spread of democracy in Latin America increases the likelihood that some sort of regional economic grouping will emerge, something with which Britain, and perhaps even the Falklands, would wish to have ties.

One intriguing question remains after yesterday's agreement, and that is whether there is now anything left for the two sides to discuss. President Menem maintains that there is; that Britain, by accepting his metaphor of "placing sovereignty under an umbrella" has recognized that it will, at some stage, have to talk about the issue.

That is certainly the view of the Labour Party, who maintain that while the wishes of the islanders must be considered, they cannot be paramount. "I can assure the islanders", Mr George Foulkes, an Opposition foreign affairs spokesman said last year, "that the Labour Party is in the business of protecting them, not selling them out". In Port Stanley, Mr Foulkes was judged to be speaking out of both sides of his mouth at once.

Within the Conservative Party, there is more than one view. There are those who believe that the issue of sovereignty cannot permanently be left on the back-burner. The majority, however, undoubtedly share the view expressed by Mr David Howell, the chairman of the Commons select committee on foreign affairs, when Mrs Thatcher stretched out a tentative hand to President Menem's olive branch — "If this is just a preliminary to falling back on the assertion that the islands are really Argentinian, we should call an abrupt halt". That is likely to remain the dominant mood of the party so long as it is led by Mrs Thatcher. It is an issue on which she reads the public mind very clearly.

## Control of the cable networks

From Viscount Torrington  
Sir, Your recent article on cable television (Business and Finance, February 8) clearly demonstrated that this new industry, sometimes referred to as the "fourth utility", is now dominated by North American investment.

This concerns me for a number of reasons. The intent of the Cable & Broadcasting Act 1984 was that the control of cable networks should rest in the hands of British or EC nationals. The intent has not been matched by reality.

As chairman of one of the only wholly British/EC applicants for a cable franchise, I am also concerned that what we are seeing is a re-run of what happened to the North Sea oil industry. The creation of BIOC (British National Oil Corporation) was the inevitable knee-jerk reaction of a Labour government to the fact that the City failed to support British involvement and that the North Sea was handed to the US oil industry on a plate.

It would be most unfortunate if a British national cable company was foisted upon the public in a similar reaction to the domination of the cable industry by the offspring of Ma Bell.

Cable is not just a means of delivery for television programmes, but is the basis for the telecommunications network of the future. The American Civil War demonstrated to governments the strategic value of the telegraph, as a result of which telecommunications became a government monopoly in most countries for the following 130 years.

In Britain it has just broken free, and the City must respond to the challenge, or telecommunications could once again become, unnecessarily, a government monopoly. Yours faithfully, TORRINGTON, 11 Grosvenor Crescent, SW1, February 13.

## Flaws of industry

From Mr M. S. P. Gardner  
Sir, Tom Bower (Spectrum, February 5; Business and Finance, February 6, 7) explains only too clearly what happens to enterprises that invest in notoriously difficult areas such as textiles and furniture manufacturing. By their very nature, these industries are volatile, subject to fashion changes and most of all, from competition at the lower level.

But this is not the real problem. The undersigned, formerly a director of a well-known Yorkshire textile company, was horrified when, in the early 70s, the then Labour Government granted our company £1 million for investment.

What happened? Because UK-built machinery was not available, the major part of this grant had to be directed by the board towards the purchase of machinery from Switzerland, Germany and even Italy. Only the bricks to be used to build a new factory were British-made. And what was the cry from the average textile manufacturer? Please let sterling be strong when we import our machinery and let it be weak so that we may export the production arising therefrom!

That was in the early 70s, but have we changed? When is the UK going finally to learn that it can only prosper by investment in engineering in the first place. We must produce the machinery that can be directed towards the production of consumer goods — not the other way round. Yours sincerely, MICHAEL S. P. GARDNER (Director), M. C. Bradenbury & Co. Ltd., 19 St Mary-at-Hill, EC3, February 6.

## Harrow development

From Mr Ian D. Robinson  
Sir, To buttress the credibility of Harrow School's development scheme, the governors' clerk (February 7) cites the plaudits of local planning officers.

That thorough officers commended this location for a theatre is strange. Just two years previously they rejected the same site for a much lower and less obtrusive school design workshop. Public files reveal officers flatter discounting this "promontory" site owing to its high visibility from the village, open space, and distant roads. Moreover, the site was "a long way from the centre of the school complex and difficult to get to, by both vehicle and on foot". Hence this was "not a site for further consideration".

Why officers should favour a site they had so recently rejected on amenity grounds remains a mystery; they themselves remain mute. Small wonder the council chose to reject its officers' "advice". Yours faithfully, IAN D. ROBINSON, 61 West Street, Harrow on the Hill, Middlesex, February 11.

## Rottweiler danger

From Mr W. T. K. P. Williams  
Sir, Mr L. P. Elsdon (February 13) overlooks the main problem. To be "savaged" by a Yorkshire terrier is one thing; to be savaged by a Rottweiler is another. Surely it is the dog's capability to maim or kill that needs to be assessed? Yours faithfully, W. T. K. P. WILLIAMS, 4 Woodthorpe Road, Putney, SW15, February 13.

## Response to transition in S Africa

From Mr T. D. Bridge  
Sir, State President F. W. de Klerk has made a shrewd political move in releasing Mr Nelson Mandela without any concession by either the South African Government or the ANC. However, the benefit of the leadership shown by both men will be lost within days if the South African police fail to change their attitude to crowd control.

The 92,000-strong force, of which more than one third are part-time reservists, has demonstrated a hard-line approach to the black population completely out of step with ministerial statements from Pretoria.

On the day before Mr Mandela's release, police opened fire, reportedly without provocation, on crowds celebrating in Tokozza, a black township near Johannesburg, killing five and wounding 45. Violent beating of rowdy elements of the huge crowd waiting to hear Mr Mandela's first speech after his release in Cape Town, on February 11, showed a barely credible lack of political sensitivity, some would say a horrifying inhumanity.

Police contingents have been involved in UN peace-keeping operations before: in the Congo and, with notable success, as a neutral interface force between the local police and the population in Cyprus. President de Klerk has shown bold political judgement in unbanning the ANC and freeing Mr Mandela. It is to be hoped that if he cannot make his police chiefs follow his Government's will, within the law, he will not hesitate to ask for UN help, while overseas credit is still at a peak.

Although article 2 of the UN Charter specifically forbids intervention in any matter "within the domestic jurisdiction of any state", any request for UN assistance from President de Klerk ought to receive a sympathetic hearing at the Security Council. Substitution of United Nations police for a police force the size of that in South Africa would simply not be feasible, quite aside from the legal and language difficulties; but a UN police-monitoring force, operating in the areas of high tension, could introduce restraint and demonstrate Pretoria's serious intention to create a calm atmosphere for the discussion of political reform.

Yours faithfully, T. D. BRIDGE (Editor, Army Quarterly and Defence Journal), 1 West Street, Tavistock, Devon, February 13.

From Mr Len Hooper  
Sir, The controversy surrounding Mrs Thatcher's reward of "lifting sanctions" in South Africa would seem to hinge not on the reward itself but on the moment that the

"reward" was first proffered to Mr de Klerk.

If Mrs Thatcher's response to Mr de Klerk was nothing more than a spontaneous gesture in recognition of a deed carried out then it was ill-considered and grossly out of step with world opinion.

If, as seems more likely, the reward was part of a prearranged deal between Mrs Thatcher and Mr de Klerk then the term "reward" has to be replaced by the word "guarantee". And, if so, the reported off-the-cuff comment on Monday by Mr Bernard Ingham, the Downing Street spokesman, that Mrs Thatcher "is leading the world" in South African affairs, begins to have some basis in fact. The guarantee would have provided the necessary security against a white backlash.

Whatever the facts of the case, Mrs Thatcher's reward for her unilateral stance, and for her attempt to rally international support, will probably be to have Britain placed at the head of the queue when the time comes to reinvest in the South African future.

Yours faithfully, LEN HOOPER, 51c Barry Road, Dulwich, SE22, February 14.

From Professor J. D. Lever  
Sir, As one who was lucky enough to be born in South Africa and to have spent his childhood in that beautiful country, may I say that I think that one of the most progressive measures which the South African Government could now enact would be an improvement of all educational opportunities for its peoples.

If, for instance, the law of the country required that all children, regardless of ethnic origin, should receive appropriate and adequate schooling whatever their domestic circumstances, this would go a long way towards removing social barriers and misunderstanding, and strengthening the prospects of universal franchise.

Yours faithfully, J. D. LEVER, University of Wales, Department of Anatomy, Park Place, Cardiff, February 14.

From Miss Elaine Lingham  
Sir, The black South Africans' choice of a leader, seen for the first time on TV, makes one feel less uneasy about being a human. Who could fail at this moment in their history to respect, salute, and wish them well?

Yours faithfully, ELAINE LINGHAM, 44 Grafton Street, Cambridge, February 13.

## Controls on drink

From Mr Derek Rutherford  
Sir, In his emotive attack on alcohol-abuse agencies in regard to advertising, Mr Bernard Levin (February 13) misses the main point. My comment, to which Mr Levin refers, was prompted originally by a letter to *The Times* (September 4, 1989) from a reader complaining that during a showing of the film *Batman* to an audience mainly of children nine of the 12 advertisements shown were for alcohol, including one for an extra-strength lager.

Does Mr Levin really believe that one has to be a fanatic to question the desirability of such intensive promotion of alcohol? In France, for example, it is forbidden to advertise alcoholic drinks on television, in young people's magazines, football stadia, and sports grounds.

Prohibition is on no one's agenda and I would be the last to deprive Mr Levin of the pleasure he gains from his glass of wine. But in the tradition of "modesty and charity" of my 19th-century forebears, which Mr Levin praises, I would proffer that the marketers

of alcohol cannot be given free rein. With that the wine connoisseur French would agree.

Yours faithfully, DEREK RUTHERFORD (Director of Studies), The Institute of Alcohol Studies, Alliance House, 12 Caxton Street, SW1, February 14.

From Viscount Cranborne  
Sir, Bernard Levin calls the new temperance lobby "wowers". He may be right, but they also form part of an increasingly powerful section of the British population — the new puritans.

So much do these closet totalitarians enjoy telling me what to do that I and most of my compatriots will shortly be covered into as joyless an existence as the English of the 1650s.

Would any of your readers be interested in helping to organize a National Day against the joyless? Three quarters of the nation could then combine to blow a collective raspberry in the general direction of Hampstead. Yours faithfully, CRANBORNE, 2 Swan Walk, SW3, February 13.

## Courts and television

From Mr B. C. Maddocks  
Sir, The Bar Council proposal that proceedings in courts and tribunals should be televised (report, February 9) is claimed to be based on the principle of open justice.

Open justice requires that all such proceedings should be heard in public and not in private. That requirement is fulfilled by the doors of the court being open to the public and to the press. Nothing more is needed.

If broadcasting is to be allowed, it must be upon some other principle, consistent with the purpose for which the courts and tribunals exist. That purpose is to do justice between the parties. It cannot be assisted by the broadcasting of the proceedings to every home in the country.

The presence of microphones and cameras is not neutral. A nervous witness could on occasion be affected in the evidence he gives. Another witness might direct his evidence to the wider audience. The pompous and self-advertising advocate could have a field day. There are many ways in which the proceedings could be adversely affected.

Of course we could curb these excesses by codes of conduct, practice directions and judges' rulings. But why create the conditions for them in the first place? Yours faithfully, B. C. MADDOCKS, 68 Quay Street, Manchester 3, February 9.

Rushdie affair is for the publishers simply to cease publication and to return the rights to the author. The book has been published with a wider readership and far more commercial success than could have been expected, so howls of indignation about freedom of expression and artistic integrity can be quietly met by considerations of that responsibility which is the foundation of civilisation.

Yours sincerely, EDWARD DE BONO, L2 Albany, Piccadilly, W1, February 12.

Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — (01)782 5946.

## Polish city in pollution peril

From Mr Nicholas John  
Sir, Having recently returned from Krakow, I am moved by this week's news that the city has elected its first Green mayor to describe the terrifying effects of pollution there. The major steel works at nearby Nowa Huta are destroying the health of the citizens with their effluent; the air is heavy with pollution and the rain is impregnated with acid; a dramatically high incidence of cancer, skin and respiratory diseases has been recorded.

Krakow is one of Europe's most beautiful and ancient cities, a miraculous architectural mixture of many centuries, more or less untouched by the devastation of the last war. Now the work of restoration and conservation is being undone as fast as it is finished by the side-effects of industry. Statues and doorways, facades and towers, the very fabric of the buildings, all are blackened and destroyed by chemical pollution.

It is vital that the international community brings pressure to bear upon the Polish Government to realise that we, for so long deprived of easy access to Eastern Europe, care about Krakow. Like Venice under the floods of 1966, it is in peril.

Yours faithfully, NICHOLAS JOHN, 69 Anson Road, N7, February 10.

## Childcare costs

From Mr R. J. Jackson  
Sir, I was delighted to read (report, February 9) that the Government is being urged to give tax relief on childcare costs to encourage mothers to return to work. It would be a much needed move in the right direction, but tax relief should not be limited to vouchers for nurseries or company canteens.

There are only a limited number of nursery places and a company-run crèche, while obviously useful, is not necessarily the most practical answer, particularly if it means a young child sharing a tiring journey to work with its mother each day as the case might be for those who work in London.

Childminders are the most common form of childcare for pre-school children in this country. If tax relief is to be given then it should also go to vouchers that can be used for registered childminders.

National Power has recently introduced a childcare charter offering this benefit, among others, and I have no doubt our working mothers would welcome tax relief on their vouchers. Yours sincerely, ROD JACKSON (Director of Personnel), National Power, Sudbury House, 15 Newgate Street, EC1, February 13.

## Legal language

From Mr Angus Stewart, QC  
Sir, The Principal Clerk of the Judicial Office of the House of Lords (February 13) might have cited Charles Dickens as authority for the proper form of petitions: and the petition said, as all petitions do say, that the petitioners were very humble, and the petitioned very honourable, and the object very virtuous (Nicholas Nickleby, Ch.2).

I wonder whether the form of prayer attached to our Scottish petitions (whereby their Lordships are humbly prayed to do this, semi-colon, that, semi-colon, and the other, full stop) has also got into literature — in writing like On the day of my departure I was up a little after five, by six we began to load the donkey, and ten minutes after my hopes were in the dust.

This is R. L. Stevenson, of course, who must have spent some time as a "devil" and junior advocate copying these things out from the style books. Yours faithfully, ANGUS STEWART, 8 Ann Street, Edinburgh 4.

## Wartime souvenir

From Mrs Dorothy White  
Sir, I read the obituary of the Dowager Duchess of Abercorn (February 6) with great interest, particularly the reference to her father, Lord Crichton.

My father served in the Royal Horse Guards and went to France in August, 1914, and my late mother remembered that he told her of an occasion when Lord Crichton asked him to hold his horse and a small prismatic compass, said he would not be long, but never came back.

The compass, which is in my possession, has "Major Ld Crichton, R. H. Gds" written on the case. My father was wounded later in the war and died from the effect of war wounds in 1921.

I have passed his war medals, service medal and 1911 Coronation Medal (he rode in the Sovereign's escort) to my grandson. Yours faithfully, DOROTHY WHITE, 32 The Grove, Idle, Bradford, West Yorkshire.

## Pride of place

From Mrs Kit Gray  
Sir, I am puzzled. There is one pink rose blooming beautifully in my garden. Is this the last or the first rose of summer?

Yours faithfully, KIT GRAY, Holmedale, Denmark Road, Exeter, Devon.











## THE ARTS

## Footnote to history

TELEVISION  
Sheridan Morley

The history man himself, Malcolm Bradbury, took over BBC 2's *Notes in the Margin* last night to write and front his first-ever television documentary. It was an intriguing if oddly uncentred look at the past 10 years through its fiction and its stage and screen drama.

Assembling a star cast of expert witnesses (Margaret Drabble, David Lodge, Richard Eyre, David Hare, Martin Amis and Norman Stone) Bradbury considered the leap from the liberal 1960s and the radical 1970s into a decade of historical theme parks such as *Brideshead*, and fiscal fictions such as *Servant of the House*, which cheered by the very people who were targets of its satire.

In a decade when immortality became an art form, Bradbury found Drabble worrying about gangsters and greedies becoming heroic. Martin Amis examined the darkening of the comic novel, and Richard Eyre showed us how *Pravda* began as an outlandish, over-the-top parody but finished up a pale forecast of the truth about mass-media ownership. Today's satire is tomorrow's undercurrent.

Most unnerving of all, perhaps, was Bradbury's encounter on the already crumbling future-shock campus of his own East Anglian University with students who reckoned that the extent of their political idealism was the purchasing of ecologically approved deodorants.

David Hare, on the other hand, noted that as the Eighties ended, theology had become the most over-subscribed faculty at Oxford. Perhaps there is a God, and if so she is doubtless already trying to assess the mortgage value of Trump Towers in the Calcutta of West Manhattan.

At a topical time for black liberation, *40 Minutes* (BBC 2) traced the lives of four black seamstresses from South Africa who have settled in London only to find that the dream of freedom has turned into despair.

Robert Fithole takes a British train and believes there must be security men behind every newspaper, so sinister is the silence in the carriage. Sont Mudebele was on Paul Simon's *Graceland* tour, but soon afterwards had to leave her son in Africa rather than risk arrest or death.

Princess Pritche came over to star in *King Kong* more than 20 years ago, but now finds herself in a British flat without much work. Jonas Gwangwa wrote the score for *Cry Freedom* and remains as haunted as all the others by the racial violence of the nation they fled. Andy Metcalf's film was at once angry and regretful, a study of exile gone wrong because countries can be escaped more easily than memories.

Over on ITV *This Week* managed a literally chilling update on the hysteria scare, finding a supermarket chief to admit he had no idea whether the frozen food he buys from abroad has been irradiated or not. The fear now is that irradiation will be used not only to kill bacteria but also to clean up contaminated food and prolong its shelf life. In that story somewhere is yet another symbolic note in the margin for the 1990s.

## Flashback to the fearless Fifties

John Russell Taylor assesses the images of the 1950s at the ICA, and Joseph Connolly examines the V&amp;A's plastic show

There is something disturbingly and excitingly unfamiliar about the show at the ICA (to April 1) devoted to The Independent Group. It can hardly be the names or styles of the artists concerned, who include Eduardo Paolozzi, Richard Hamilton, William Turnbull and Alison and Peter Smithson. Moreover, no group of young, soon-to-be-famous artists founded in the early Fifties can be expected to produce a shock of the new today.

And yet, there is something these artists are all looking positively towards the future, and have confidence in their ability to help shape it. It seems a long time since we have encountered young artists in this country setting out with similar optimism.

The Independent Group came together in the shadow of the newly founded Institute of Contemporary Arts, and with the general "tonic for the nation" of the Festival of Britain still working in the system. They were visionaries, looking forward to a new fusion of popular and high culture that would bring contemporary arts into the homes of ordinary people.

In practice they believed (particularly the Smithsons, who were the architects of the outfit) in revolutionizing the way such people lived, sweeping away the war-torn slums in favour of gleaming high-rises enclosing streets in the sky, where the inhabitants could walk and shop, and their children could play without danger.

Now that it is constantly suggested that the 1950s high-rise working-class estates were the result of architects' *folie de grandeur* and were neglected, or actually hostile to, normal human concerns, it is curious to be reminded of these high hopes, the closely argued (if sometimes misguided) social studies on the basis of which this now despised housing was planned. But a glance at the Smithsons' project for the Golden Lane development immediately makes vivid for us the utopian ideals which actuated them, and many other planners.

The most telling part of the show is that which reconstructs, as far as possible, the exhibition *This is Tomorrow*, staged by the group

at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1956. A number of displays are remade, and many of the artworks then shown are dusted off.

The latter reveal that not all the group members went on to greater fame and fortune. Who now remembers the painter Magda Cordell, whose work — obviously related to the contemporary *tachisme* and *art brut* across the Channel — still has its own power and individuality, now just emerging from the curse of being too much of the period for its own good. And what about Nigel Henderson, intensely observant photographer of the East End, or John McHale, inventive surrealist collageist?

But still the main impact comes from the known names, who appear now as precursors of Pop Art as well as the inheritors of the Dada tradition: either way, they stand out strongly for the breaking-down of barriers between fine art and popular design.

The things that Paolozzi did with film-fan magazine images and extracts from commercial catalogues, or the way that Hamilton put his weight-lifter in the parlour for "Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?" both foretell a time when the artistic quality of a work is assessed, not by inherent qualities, but rather by where and how it is exhibited.

The crop of current British

artists on show in London galleries seem for the most part poised between past and future, fearful of what is to come or deeply aware of how much of the past is buried in the present.

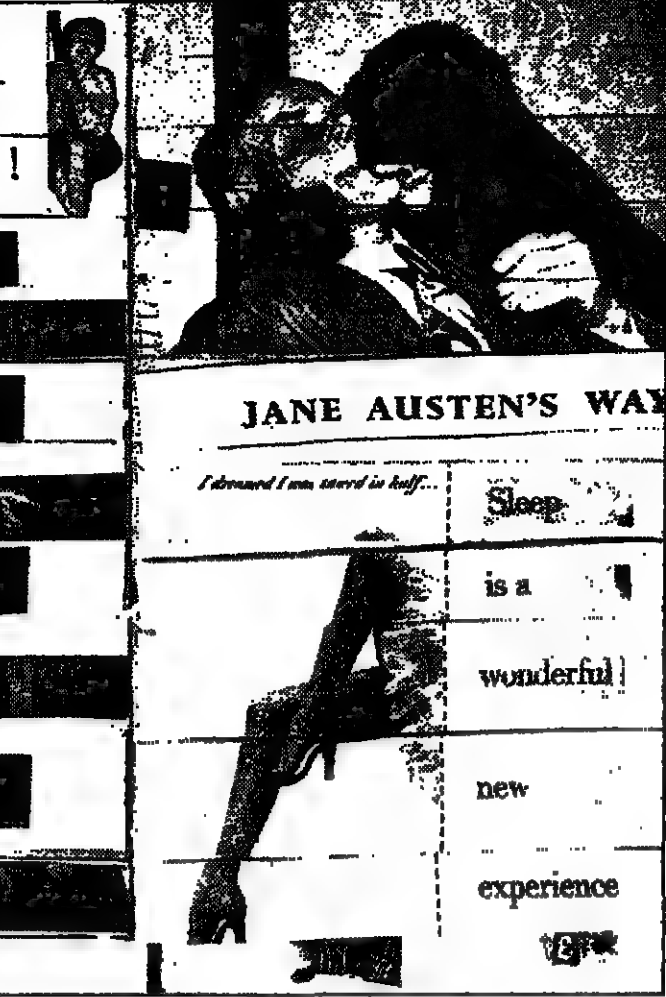
Peter Simpson, for instance, whose new sculptures are on show at Michaelson and Orient (to March 3) almost literally builds his art out of the wreckage of the past. He began some years ago as a potter, winning golden opinions with his delicate porcelain evocations of undersea creatures. Now his works are definitely sculptures, as much as Paolozzi's are, and in rather the same way, taking found objects, fragments of architectural detail and domestic devices and fusing them into complex moulded or impressed shapes.

They are still made from clay — he has not, like other ex-potters such as Jacqueline Poncellet, forsaken his original material, in order to gain more prestige — but by now any connection with the craft and of ceramics is strictly coincidental.

The sculptures use evocative titles like "Gris Charentais", "Saintonge" and "Volets", and the whole series is entitled "Carcassonne Suite", apparently because Simpson found inspiration in the way that French medieval buildings have undergone change without having evidence of the process tidied away, so that all periods happily co-exist.

5 HOURS OF BEAUTY  
IN JUST 30 SECONDS!

John McHale's collage, "Why I took to the washers in luxury flats", took the photographic world apart in 1954



## And how the Swinging Sixties finally liberated plastic

"I was born with a plastic spoon in my mouth!" sang Roger Daltrey in The Who's Sixties hit "Substitute". From the current revivalist vogue for all things bright and shiny, two facts seem to emerge: first, plastic is no longer considered to be a substitute and second, Daltrey should have hung on to his spoon.

The *Plastics Age: From Modernity to Post-Modernity*, at the V & A, boasts a wealth of weirdness that one would not immediately associate with the idea of plastic: Volcanic charcoal holders of 1900 (made to resemble miniature well-smoked meerschaum pipes), or a comb looking like ivory and, for some reason, three feet long.

The Edwardians seemed to have been both thrilled by the novelty of these latest synthetics, and determined to disguise the truth of the material. Hence the plethora of dressing table sets and cigarette boxes fashioned from enamel, turned to be a substitute and second, Daltrey should have hung on to his spoon.

By the 1930s, however, designers in Britain and America were reveling in the modernity of such materials as Bakelite. Although still demonstrating a nostalgia for semi-precious stones, the shapes were decidedly Deco. Radios, telephones and those hair dryers that evoke all the spirit of a Howitzer remain most

evocative of the period, and all are well represented.

The Thirties staff is sophisticated, solid and reassuring, but the true splendour of plastic was not revealed until the Sixties, when even those designers who were not immediately psychedelic were, at the very least, downright groovy. Furniture came to resemble big toys for big kids, the ultimate being Aulenti's "Globe" chair of 1961, immortalised in Patrick McGeehan's TV series *The Prisoner*, and seen here in refreshingly glorious, glossy wraps.

The Fifties, by comparison, are skinned over, perhaps rightly. It was that decade that gave plastic

its traditionally tawdry connotation — brittle, cheap "Empire Made" toys, bleached, cracked buckets, and combs that spat teeth with real venom. One image of the Fifties is evoked by some sad sprays of plastic apple blossom, looking as if they belonged atop plastic coffins (which, incidentally, were actually produced in limited quantities during the War, although none has ever been seen, unscathed).

The real joy of plastic comes from goods that could be made from nothing else at all and are a celebration of the material. Lego remains a supreme example. This V & A *festschrift* could well make people lustful for more rainbow-coloured ice-buckets and salad

servers than might strictly be good for them — certainly it presents the new enthusiasm with colour and brio, and succeeds in making the subject as amusing, nostalgic, scholarly or silly as you want it to be — although there remains something unintentionally humorous about the concept of so much familiar plastic entrapped under glass.

Joseph Connolly

● The *Plastics Age: From Modernity to Post-Modernity* is at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7, until April 29. Penny Sparke's book *The Plastics Age* is published in conjunction with the exhibition (V & A Publications, £19.50).

## Firework display

CONCERT  
Paul GriffithsLMP/Glover  
Queen Elizabeth Hall

There is then a firework display — or as much of a firework display as a classical orchestra can generate — followed by sombre, threatening sounds from horns and low trumpets for the companion picture of King Harold looking down at ghostly ships.



Judith Weir: a serious view

It was all a long way from the other oddity of the evening, Wolf-Ferrari's *Suite Concertino*, which only the legendary tenacity of bassoonists has kept alive. Kim Walker had some opportunity to show off skills in phrasing and speed, but the thing is dull, dull.

Here is yet another Wigmore debutante who comes to London with a reputation stretched out like a red carpet before her. In this case America's "newest opera star" earned it, for British audiences at least, in her 1987 success at Wexford: since then she has been receiving the full marketing treatment across the Atlantic, and has been singing *Aida* from sea to shining sea.

There is certainly a bold image there to mark it. Marc's physical and vocal stage presence are both larger than life. A carriage to vie with that of Jesse Norman and a programme which takes Beethoven's "Ah, perfido!" Wagner's "Dich, teure Halle!" and a final dash of Lehar all in one big stride is clearly a potential hot property. The image, though, is in danger of becoming greater than the

## Larger than life

RECITAL  
Hilary FinchAlessandra Marc  
Wigmore Hall

reality. Marc is far from the finished product: cries of "Va, scellerato!" did not pierce as they should; Elisabeth's greeting failed to thrill; Brahms and Lehar burst their stylistic banks.

But the expressive shortfall was not a result of any lack of sensitivity or intelligence. Her Berlioz (two

swift-moving *legato* proved that; and so did her four Richard Strauss songs, each one acutely aware of the shifting weight of the word-setting).

Nor was it a result of Marc's natural voice. There is huge potential in its wide and soundly integrated range, its dark bloom in *legato*, its resilience at *fortissimo*.

What Marc needs now is not the impetus of a publicity machine, but the patient help of both time and a master craftsman — who can match the core of the voice to the core of the note, so as to make movement bite; who can adjust scale, and focus timbre. Roger Vignoles brought the wealth of potential in Marc's singing to the fore: his piano transcriptions of Wagner and Berlioz were outstanding.

## Funny side of strife

THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale

Man of the Moment  
Globe Theatre

Time is short, the television crew is about to break, the cameras are rolling. But before they finish shooting the carefully faked encounter in the opulent Mediterranean patio, the gardener falls into the pool. And the reaction of the presenter as we watch him come up once, twice, three times for air? "Keep talking! Keep that idiot out of shot!" "Imagine having to set it all up again after lunch!"

That's television. It is also quintessential Ayckbourn, in the technical and comic challenge he sets himself. As director of *Man of the Moment*, he proves as able to handle water as earth, air, and doubtless fire. As author, he somehow makes you feel the scene's awfulness and the dreadful hilarity of its contrasts.

I'm not saying he succeeded throughout in giving us "a completely serious play that makes people laugh without stopping", but he comes as close to his long-stated aim as one could expect, considering his material. Exploitation, careerism, callousness and worse are amply on show; yet I found myself more consistently amused than by *The Way Upstream* or *Just Between Ourselves*, hitherto his blackest comedies.

Exploitation began years ago, when the papers made a hero of the clerk who "had a go" in a bank raid, got him to marry the girl hurt in the scuffle, then forgot him. It continued when television turned the "reformed" robber, Vic, into a popular pundit and wealthy villa-owner. It is still to be seen in the media-managed reunion between this celebrity and his assistant, Douglas, who now drably toils in sunless suburbia.

Ayckbourn, as usual, avoids the obvious. Try as he may, Samantha Bond's sweetly ambitious presenter cannot put Douglas into expressing envy at this contrast of fortunes. As Michael Gambon plays the part, he is more like the all-accepting Arthur Pewty of Monty Python: placid, bashful, gormlessly grinning from inside his unsuitable tweed jacket as he

utters yet another platitude — "You can't beat British Airways, not for flying."

So has Ayckbourn substituted caricature — Mr Mediocre from Purley — for predictability? As it turns out, no. Gambon finds an awkward sensitivity under the relentless bonhomie, a buried sadness, and something not often seen on any stage. If it were not so unpretentiously instinctive, you could call it goodness.

Certainly, Vic comes increasingly to represent his moral opposite. As Peter Bowles plays him, medallion dangling across bronzed chest, he effortlessly combines Wormwood Scrubs chic with Television Centre brutality.

To his witting wife (Diane Bull) he is "a selfish scumbag", to the lovelorn *au pair* (Shirley-Anne Selby), a merciless tease, and to Douglas, at the play's funny-painful climax, another opportunity for displaying his chivalric impulses. If evil consists of cynicism and complete indifference to anyone whom you cannot use or torment, then Bowles's swaggering Vic is as evil as any character Ayckbourn has invented.

Yet, if you subtract a somewhat plonkily ironic ending, it is as entertaining as it is to the point. One final thing. As vivid character as any in the play is Douglas's chirpy wife, Nerys: scarred inside and outside, frightened of having children, being attacked at home or venturing outdoors, yet putting up with it all.

The point is, this archetypal Ayckbourn victim never appears. At this stage of his career, her author can bring even an offstage character plausibly to life. What can the next stage of his career add?



A look at life from the other side of the camera: Michael Gambon, Peter Bowles and Shirley-Anne Selby

## Comedy from the good book

Alasdair Cameron

Mistero Buffo  
King's, Glasgow

Borderline Theatre Company's new production of Dario Fo's *Mistero Buffo* seemed like an act of contrition on the part of both the director, Moring Fullarton and the star of the show, Robbie Coltraine. Fullarton was making amends for *Glavegas*, her abysmal offering for last year's Mayfest; and Coltraine for the Hogmanay fiasco in George Square. Happily, *Mistero Buffo* is a very handsome amendment.

Fo's play is based on the scurrilous and blasphemous versions of Biblical events which were popular with medieval minstrels. The remoteness means that each section has to be introduced with a lengthy preamble that provides a background and points a modern moral. These amplifications give Coltraine a chance to shine. He attacks with relish almost every figure in the demography of socialist stand-up comics: from the DSS

to Scottish Tories, from privatization to Prime Minister. The targets are easy and familiar, but pinned to the gallery with comic precision.

Indeed, there is a sense in which this evening belongs much more to Coltraine than to Fo. From his first entrance to a burst of Verdi, in an opera singer's frock, to his inspired clowning with the holy statues on the set, it is an imbalance between context and text. This is a play, because Fullarton and her translator Joe Farrell have concocted a sinuous, playable version in hilarious Glasgow dialect. Coltraine, however, seems happier with his own material than with Fo's.

The mixture works best best in the "marriage feast of Cana". There, Coltraine's miraculous ear for accents and social comment is given fullest rein. At one point two posh Glasgow ladies are debating whether the Madonna's accent is not just a touch common, when they suddenly remember that, of course, her husband is a Jew. Superb, too, is Coltraine's picture of Pope Boniface VIII as a Mafia gangster. This, however, is balanced with swipes at Ulster's Protestant gangsterism. Here, as too seldom in the evening, we sense difficult questions being asked about religion.

Medieval minstrels sometimes lost their lives for plain-speaking; here, there is no real sense of danger in the material or in the choice of satirical targets. The evening is a celebration of Coltraine's talent as a stand-up comic, but it is a talent worth celebrating.

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## THE ARTS/ROCK

Mike Nicholls reveals that the BPI is taking a more professional approach to the 1990 Brits Awards

## Just the job for a kingpin



Switch of image: Jonathan King is, Samantha Fox out didn't bother to ask me again. The next year they made a mess of the timing, which meant Rick Astley didn't get to collect his award, and last year we all know about. So this year I'm producing, writing and what I laughingly describe as devising the awards.

ber as the girl from *Ready, Steady Go*. But, according to King, "the host will not be the pivotal figure. The star of this year's show will be the music itself. This means raising the importance of the individual stars who are presenting the awards and that of the nominees and winners."

"Then, a lot of categories who don't appear in these categories will also be featured, especially those who are a part of British music and have done a great deal for it. There will be montages showing everyone from Max Bygraves to the Mission. We will see a celebration of British music."

Clearly the BPI has learned from past mistakes, such as appointing such questionable luminaries as Mick Fleetwood and Samantha Fox to do the presenting. But the organization also has other feathers to unfrill, including the controversy over CD prices that *Which?* magazine spectacularly reopened recently. King seems unconcerned that even people in the industry feel CDs should have dropped in price by now.

"Hiccups about prices will always cause moans," he replies, "but the basic fact is that the British music industry's image is sensational. Records are being bought all over the world and

feature highly in every major international chart. I personally would hold that music is the most successful industry this country has. English rock might be a little quiet at the moment, but then up pops someone like Nigel Kennedy, who is suddenly giving an image to classical music which it has never had before."

No conversation with Jonathan King is complete without being reminded of his own successes in the Seventies with his own label, UK Records, which he still modestly reckons to be the most successful independent company in pop history. "I've still had more hits than Jason Donovan and Bros combined," he says.

So, since his TV career now seems to be on hold, as they say (after eight years, King's *Entertainment USA* series has come to an end) he is likely to see the return of JK in his entrepreneurial hat? "Well," he hints, "don't be surprised if I was to re-enter the industry in some capacity or other, but it would have to be fun, exciting and a challenge and above all something I really wanted to do."

"It is those factors, not money, which drive people like Peter Waterman and Richard Branson. It's a very British attitude and one which explains why our musicians are so successful and why we deserve to have award ceremonies in the first place." So now we know.

## Polish but no passion

## ALBUMS

David Sinclair

Lloyd Cole: Lloyd Cole (Polydor 841 907-1)

While doubtless a momentous event to those involved, the parting of the ways between Lloyd Cole and his long-serving Comotions has had scant effect on Cole's music, notwithstanding his new, stubbly, George Michael-gone-to-seed image.

Lloyd Cole is thus another well-ordered, understated and at times rather bloodless collection of Anglicized soft rock songs, which efficiently showcases its creator's distinctively stylized, low-register croon.

One big plus is the deep-twang guitar playing of Robert Quine, formerly of Richard Hell's Voidoids and Lou Reed's band, which gilds many of the songs with an elegant, neo-country ballad touch, the sort of thing that Chris Isaak does with such *clon*. Quine is joined on several polished, workmanlike performances by drummer Fred Maher (Lou Reed and others) who injects an untypical muscular backbeat into "Sweetheart" and "I Hate to See You Baby Doing That Stuff."

Cole's speciality is to evince a detached, academic interest in the affairs of his heart while keeping the undignified spectre of passion firmly at bay. At his best, as on the moody "No Blue Skies" and the bluesy boogie of "Downtown", he gently stirs up a combination of neat, uncomplicated melody and thoughtful lyrics.

But he is certainly not about to break sweat over any of it and too often his deadpan delivery is as invigorating as a limp handshake. At times, during the mundane whimsy of "Undressed" for instance, the sheer politesse of the exercise becomes tiresome.

The Cramps: Stay Sick (Enigma ENVP 1001)

Like some of the trashy horror B-movies from which they so gleefully derive inspiration, the Cramps just run and run. It is now 14 years since the ghoulish singer Lux Interior and his frolicsome partner, the guitarist Poison Ivy Rorschach, convened the band in New York. Yet still there are no signs of any smoothing of the very rough musical edges, nor of any dilution of the comedy-shock tactics that have won them such a huge and devoted cult following.

*Stay Sick* is a high-kitsch assemblage of psychobilly and swamp-surf themes played with the customary degree of genial ineptitude. "Journey to the Centre of a Girl", "The Creature From the Black Leather Lagoon" and "Bikini Girls With Machine Guns" all bowl along with plenty of enthusiasm and little variation. Lux's densely echoed voice snarls and roars impressively, while new recruit Candy Del Mar plonks out bass lines that do not so much walk as totter along in the wake of Nick Knox's erratic snare beat.

The group's untypically lively press biography observes that the Cramps' songs are about "decapitations, transmutations, psychofrenzies, invading saucer-men, voodoo and pussy", which leaves me with little to add, save to say that they are more fun on stage than they are in the front room.

Johnny Clegg and Savuka: Cruel, Easy, Beautiful World (EMI CDP 7834462)

Three years ago, Johnny Clegg's seamless fusion of Western rock and South African township jive was still a groundbreaking novelty. Now, although his anti-apartheid message has become considerably more volatile, with songs like "One (Hu) Man One Vote" being nothing if not explicit, his music is beginning to sound like a pan-African version of Phil Collins. When his voice reaches the upper register during the catchy pop melody of "Rolling Ocean" his singing resembles that of Sting and indeed, the breezy reggae inflection of "It's an Illusion" is redolent of the Police in general.

It is many years since Clegg was a Johannesburg street performer, and with his 1987 album *Third World Child* having registered sales of more than two million copies, he has clearly become an influential actor on the international stage. But it still seems incongruous for such an issued music to turn out so bright and resoundingly mainstream. Despite the surface fizz, and lyrics evidently written from the heart, the songs here lack the deeper emotional resonance of his best known material, "Scatterlings of Africa" and "Asimbonanga".



Cool Lloyd Cole: passion spent

Clint Black: Killin' Time (RCA PD 0443)

Clint Black, from Houston, Texas, is the latest doyen of country music's young fogey tendency. Still only 27, his rich, burnished drawl is a dead ringer for that of Randy Travis (30), himself a diligent student of old-time greats like Merle Haggard, Hank Williams and George Jones.

Unlike Travis, Black leads his own Texan band and performs predominantly his own material. His debut album is a relaxed, highly accomplished affair which, even at its jauntiest, as on "Straight From the Factory", would not cause Grandpa's rocking chair to miss a beat. Fiddle, steel guitar and harmony vocals drift into gentle but precise focus on traditional sounding ballads like "Nobody's Home" and "You're Gonna Leave Me Again", providing eloquent testament to the regenerative qualities which have characterized country music for so long.

## WEEKEND GIGS

Compiled by David Sinclair, David Toop and Rose Rouse

RODOLFO Y SU TIPICA RAY: 42-year-old Colombian singer Rodolfo Alcaraz has been a Cumbie and salsa superstar throughout South America since the late Sixties, but has only recently been introduced to audiences in this country by his Cumbie anthem "La Colegiala" which was prominently featured in a television coffee commercial. His Tipica RAY band are renowned masters of the hot-blooded Latino hoe-down. Empire, Leicester Square, WC1 (01-437 1448) Sunday, 7.30pm, £7.50.

HENRY THREADGILL AND THE JAZZ WARRIORS: The New York-based reeds virtuoso, renowned as one of the most challenging composers in contemporary jazz, hooks up with Britain's celebrated black big band for the first concert of this year's Camden Jazz Festival. Also on the bill is Working Week, featuring Simon Booth and Larry Stabbins, and District Six led by South African percussionist Brian Abrahamson. Town &amp; Country, 8-17 Highgate Road, London NW5 (01-284 0303), Sunday, 8.30pm, £7.50.

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS: Bright, buzzy, eccentric Brooklyn duo of John Flansburgh and John Linnell. Renowned for their hyperactive arty videos and variety of sounds. Now and then they come across like Jonathan Richman on uppers.

University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1 (01-253 6481), tonight, 7.30pm, £5.

WILLIE NELL: Music from Zimbabwe has a tendency to be one-dimensional but Willie Nell, who began her career with Tabu Ley's and has a subtle, tender voice, clearly values melody as much as the usual unrestrained riffs and rhythms of Central Africa. Hammersmith Palais, Shepherd's Bush Road, London, W6 (01-748 2812), Sunday, 7.30pm, £5.50.

1990 UK RAPPING CONTEST: This may be the chance to see some hot makers of the future. After all, the Cookie Crew started their career by winning a rap contest. Be prepared for the very worst, also. Camden Palace, Camden Road, London NW1 (01-257 0428), Monday, 7.30pm, £5.

FRANK CHICKENS: KLUB KARAOKE: This is guaranteed to be a very amusing evening spent in the strange clutches of Japanese female duo, the Frank Chickens. All sorts of different people get the urge to sing anything from Jeline to Yesterday to backing tracks. Old But Art Centre, 68 High Street, Barnet (01-449 0048) today, 8pm, £4.95.

AC TEMPLE: Sheffield band who are signed to noise specialists Blast First. They've recently released an album, *Scorpions* which sounds like a pleasant version of Sonic Youth. Expect layer upon layer of guitars. The Black Lion, Giles Street, Northampton (0604 22178) today, 8pm, £4. Counterpoint, Princes Way, Brixley (01828 370003) tomorrow, 8pm, £4. Edwards No 8, John Bright Street, Birmingham (021-645 5610) Sunday, 8pm, £4.

## Sad songs out of school

In publicity photographs she looks as though she's just been told that the family cat has been run down. In her songs, where G is for grieving and H is for hard as in hard luck, there is a similar sense of loss.

But in person Tanita Tikaram is a giggler who still inhabits that school-girlish world where the extreme of adversity is "boring" and the peak of ecstasy is "fun".

Her friends, she says, think it is terribly funny to see her on *Wogan*, "because I haven't changed at all", she in turn thinks it funny that interviewers expect her sudden vast income to have brought changes to her life.

"People have a very funny idea of what happens," she says of her (more or less overnight) transition from Besingstone's sixth-form song dabbler (with a place at Manchester University) to international recording star.

"Nothing happens. Your hangovers are the same. Your joy is the same. It doesn't suddenly become different because you become vaguely successful."

Yet there are perks, are there not? Things like recognition, praise, travel, fun... and the royalties on 3.5 million copies of *Ancient Heart*.

"It's nice," she admits, "but it's not something you really want to think about. You know how bad or good you are. Besides, I'm only 20 years old. I couldn't retire."

Tanita was born to a Fijian Indian father serving in the British Army in West Germany, and a mother from Borneo. Her earliest musical memories are of Otis Redding, The Beatles, Fijian folk music and Patsy Cline — "the sort of things my parents listened to".

She started writing seriously when she was 16, after brief childhood collaborations with her brother. "I picked up the guitar and realized it was something I could do," she says. At 18, after an acoustic floor spot at London's Mean Fiddler club (see below), she was noticed by agent Paul Charles, who offered to manage her.

Nine months later, she had an album out and in the charts. Almost 18 months after that she has released *The Sweet Keeper*, a much less varied

Steve Turner meets Tanita Tikaram, the girl who went from the sixth form to stardom

album, and one which raises the question of whether she has the inspiration to hold her audience.

*Ancient Heart* was the pick of her first two years of amateur songwriting. *The Sweet Keeper* was written on the run in Europe and America — between performances, press conferences and television appearances. Does she now find herself under pressure to deliver the goods? "No, I don't," she says. "I would write whenever I was a student or whatever I was doing. I write because I have to. If I don't, I feel awful. It's that basic."

"I have very definite writing phases: 13 songs this month; but before that I hadn't written for four months. Just before you start writing you go through a period where you think you'll never write again. I don't know why that is. It's weird really."

Her songs are packed with images and have evocative Celtic arrangements, but if there is a tale being told it is a hard one to follow. She says she is happy for it to be that way, citing the work of Van Morrison and Leonard Cohen in her defence.

"A song should give you a feeling. If it told a story the interest would be momentary and you wouldn't need to go back to it. A good song you can go back to."

Currently she is on a three-month tour of nine countries that began at the Hexagon in Reading, Berkshire, and will end at the Olympia in Paris. "You carry on learning," she says, shrugging her shoulders.

And why is it that she has such a sullen image? "There aren't that many funny photographers around," she says, with a laugh.

• Tanita Tikaram performs at Birmingham Town Hall tonight, Brighton Dome on Sunday, Portsmouth Guildhall on Monday, Bristol (Colston Hall) on Tuesday, and Hammersmith Odeon on Thursday and Friday next week.



Giggly and girlish Tanita Tikaram: "I write because I have to. If I don't, I feel awful. It's that basic"

## At home on the range in the back of beyond

The Mean Fiddler, once a derelict building, has now become a popular music venue of mythical status, as Rose Rouse reports

Situated in deepest Harelesden, in north-west London, not exactly the most fashionable or accessible part of the capital, the Mean Fiddler is hardly an obvious contender for fame as a last night spot.

Moreover, its capacity is just 600 — compared, for instance, with the Town & Country's 2,000. Yet, eight years after its opening night, the Mean Fiddler has turned into a mini-empire. Under its ownership umbrella, there are now two nightclubs — the Powerhaus in Islington and Subterranea near Ladbroke Grove — plus its latest acquisition, the 2,000-seater Grand Theatre in Chapham.

A 43-year-old Irishman called Vince Power is responsible for this unexpected expansion. Power, who formerly ran second-hand furniture shops and still keeps one

going in case his other business collapses, has an abiding passion for country and western music.

Consequently, when a derelict building came up for sale, he turned it into a ranch-like country and western venue. "When I first came, everyone was dressed as a cowboy," says the promoter, 24-year-old "Dave-id" Phillips. "It was like a country and western weekend at Batllus."

Phillips was a squatter who lived nearby, but soon afterwards he became the Mean Fiddler's booking agent. "Vince realized there wasn't a big enough English country and western scene to support the venue," he says.

Phillips promptly contacted all manner of American thrash bands, new country acts and guitar-based rock bands. "The Pogues played here for £25," Phillips says, "and Lloyd Cole played for £50. People suddenly realized there was a venue to be reckoned with that wasn't in the West End."

The Mean Fiddler organization has a significant financial advantage over many live venues in London — its bars are not run by breweries. As a result, Power and Phillips can afford to match fees paid to big bands by much larger venues. Before Christmas, for instance, Big Audio Dynamite played four nights at Subterranea,

which holds 500 people. "It was a credible thing for them to do," Phillips says. "It's more interesting than playing a big venue."

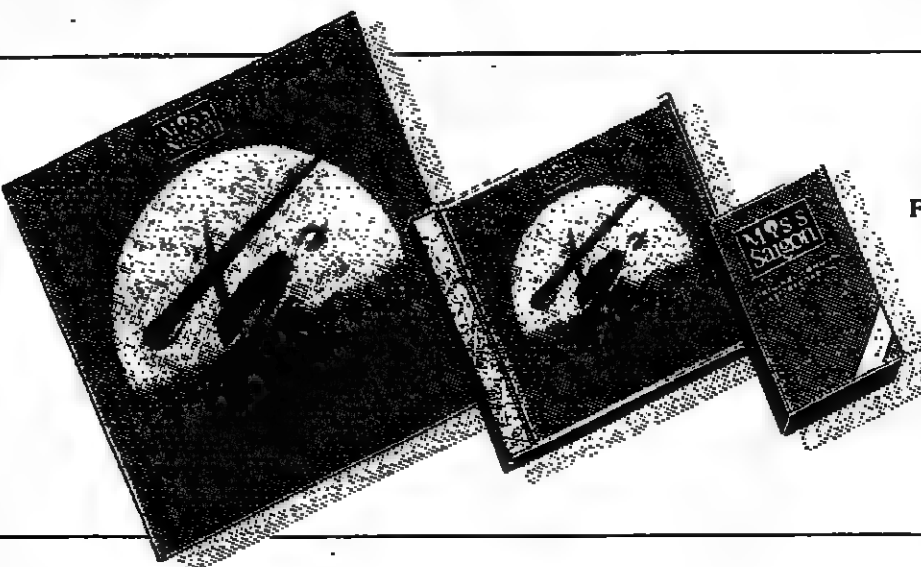
There are now nine bars at the Mean Fiddler and an Acoustic Room that has attained almost mythical status because Tanita Tikaram made her first live appearance there for no fee. "There was a real need for a small venue with an intimate atmosphere," Phillips says. Tikaram played to seven people and was signed to WEA shortly afterwards.

Last year, Power and Phillips took over the promotion of the rapidly ailing Reading Festival.

"The likes of Bonny Tyler were headlining," Phillips says. "We wanted to put on something more diverse, like the European Music Festival." Having persuaded bands like New Order, The Pogues and The Mission to perform, instead of heavy-metal bands, they attracted a crowd of 40,000 for the first time in years.

The Mean Fiddler is determinedly isolationist in relation to the music business. "I'm sure some of them still laugh at us," Phillips says. Promoting staff from within, going to Dublin to procure bar staff, encouraging provincial bands to come down in coach-buses with their mothers and fathers — these are all policies which serve to keep the Mean Fiddler organization alone but successful on the hazardous live rock 'n' roll circuit.

MISS Saigon



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TEMPUS

# Oil price question over BP shares

BP shares have been motoring ever since the oil price began to catch fire, and they could get a further kick from the prediction of the outgoing chairman, Sir Peter Walters, that it may reach \$25 by the mid-1990s.

But at 343p, against 250p less than six months ago, have they come too far?

Strip out the £383 million book profit on its oil stocks arising from the price rise, and the 44 per cent surge in net income is shaved to 9 per cent. If demand continues as buoyant as the company believes, stock holding gains will become a regular feature of the profit and loss account over the next five years, although not necessarily of the size seen here.

Downstream, where a rise in the crude price is met with rather less enthusiasm, refining margins are already looking a touch slimmer.

In chemicals, where return on capital hit a frothy 30 per cent in the opening six months, a 20 per cent rise in the naphtha price has eaten into margins.

The disposal programme, which contributed £390 million of extraordinary income from below the 1989 line — out of the £2.7 billion sale of the minerals and coals interests — continues, and will throw up a further £1.5 billion in 1990. Indeed, £1 billion is already in the can.

BP, which reckons that

every \$500 million banked clips a point off its gearing, expects the debt/equity ratio to be about 38 per cent next December, against the current 42 per cent.

A lower-than-expected tax bill this time, at about 20 per cent, has enhanced earnings per share at 31.8p, indicating an historic p/e multiple of 10.9. But it rises to 12.6 if Mr Ian Graham, at County Nat-West WoodMac, is right in forecasting £1.47 billion net income for the current year.

Much will depend on the performance of the oil price, and given the industry's marked historic lack of success in predicting its course for any reasonable period of time into the future, a little healthy scepticism over some of the projections would seem to be in order.

If the \$25 barrel of oil does arrive before 1995, it is more likely to be cost-driven than demand-driven.

The impression is that BP shares are looking 10 per cent too high.

## Amstrad

Amstrad's interim figures represent something of a Houdini act on the part of its sometimes truculent chairman, Mr Alan Sugar, recently heard threatening to take the company private, so great was his dissatisfaction with the City.

Such threats are now behind



Ahead of expectations: Alan Sugar, chairman of Amstrad

him, the shares having advanced some 20p from their low point, up another 2½p to 57½p yesterday after half-way profits to end-December came in well ahead of expectations at £30.1 million pre-tax against £75.3 million last time.

Most startling has been the progress on the balance sheet. Borrowings stood at £114 million at the financial year-end. By the end of this month,

admittedly the seasonal low-point for debt, Amstrad should be cash-neutral, aided by a good Christmas selling season — Mr Sugar claims an uncharacteristic excess of caution last summer meant not enough business computers were made to meet demand.

Progress has been made over the huge pile of unsold stocks, even if it has meant selling them at distress prices which eroded average mar-

gins. Inventory levels in September peaked at £335 million, or more than half that year's turnover, but should be down by a third in March.

The technical problems that led to the recall of two ranges of business computers last summer are over, and as of this week there is a new management structure, including a much-needed linkman to smooth ruffled feathers in the City.

Amstrad is never again going to be the high-flyer it once was. But pre-tax profits of approaching £40 million this year could be followed by £65 million in 1990-91, and some analysts believe the company capable of £90 million in due course.

A prospective earnings multiple of more than 12 times this year will therefore shrink to less than 5 next. Not cheap, but understanding if Mr Sugar is at last back on course.

## Crest Nicholson

If the aim of Crest Nicholson is to emerge from the current period of stagnation in better shape than it went in, yesterday's results look distinctly encouraging.

No more than at balance-sheet level. Gearing of just 11 per cent at the October year-end (perhaps 20 per cent now) is the stuff of boardroom dreams. But there is no escaping the harsh treatment that

the property market is currently meting out.

Construction companies have grown fat on commercial development schemes in recent years. Building an office block or parade of shops then selling it to institutions has been profits for old rope.

The problem for everyone, including Crest, is that the institutions have stopped buying property and show no signs of returning.

Some £15.3 million of Crest's £37 million of pre-tax profits last year came from commercial developments, double the year before. Analysts are looking for a £10 million contribution this year, but it could be even less.

As for house-building profits, which contributed £17.3 million last year, it is a case of pick your number. Like most developers Crest was experiencing improved demand in the first weeks of this year. This week's rise in mortgage rates might — it is too early to say — have stopped that in its tracks.

Analysts are following the cautious lead of the Crest management and have pencilled in total profits of £20 million or so for the current year. With about 16p of earnings, that puts the shares — after yesterday's sharp fall — on a p/e of 10. Despite the company's successful diversification and management flair, in the short term that still looks expensive.

## BUSINESS ROUNDUP

### Racal in Government communications plan

The Government has asked Racal Electronics to submit detailed plans for a private telecommunications network, which could bring savings of up to £100 million a year. Racal already operates a private data network which is being used by 15 Government departments.

The system would combine voice and data communications for up to 400,000 users within Government departments. It could bring Racal revenue of more than £1 billion over the next 10 years and, analysts estimate, a pre-interest profit of £100 million a year at the end of the 10 year period. The existing private telephone system which links 700 official buildings would become a part of the new system. Racal Electronics shares rose 7p to 231p on the news.

### Lonrho signs Ugandan deal

Lonrho East Africa, the Lonrho unit in Kenya, has signed a joint venture agreement with Uganda's Katamba Properties to develop Uganda's tourist industry. The Ugandan firm, which owns three hotels, a tour company and an air charter business, hopes to work with Lonrho at improving Ugandan tourist facilities, and launching package tours.

### Green shrugs off charges

Despite a fourfold increase in its interest charge, Green Properties, the Irish development and investment company, managed a 50 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £12.12 million in the year to end-December. The figure, however, included an £1.15 million trading profit. An £15.76 million extraordinary item transfers to reserves.

### Trace logs 10.2% rise

Pre-tax profits at Trace Computers, the computer software design and property management software, which came to the market last June, climbed by 10.2 per cent to £934,000 in the six months to end-November. Turnover was up 25.7 per cent to £5.79 million.

Net interest payments came to £39,000, compared with last year's £40,000 positive balance. Earnings per share slipped from 4.97p to 4.78p. There is an interim dividend of 0.55p. Mr Robert Carefull, the chairman, said all the divisions of Trace (Computer Holdings), the group's principal subsidiary, have continued to trade at a satisfactory level.

### Whitegate to buy two clubs

Whitegate Leisure, Mr Nick Oppenheim's Third Market discotheque and bowling group, where the Australian Fairfax family has a 53 per cent interest, has exchanged contracts to purchase two more discotheques for a total of £1.13 million in cash. The company is buying the Moon Ronge Discotheque and the Montmartre Night Club in Chesham, the shares were unchanged at 37p.

### Wheway sells chain-maker

Wheway, the environmental control and engineering products group, has sold Wheway Becker, the 50 per cent-owned Walsall company, which makes chains for the mining industry, to FKL, the electrical products group, for £600,000. Wheway's share of Wheway Becker's pre-tax profit in the year to end-September was nil, on a total turnover of £7.1 million.

### Photo-Me at £8.83m

Photo-Me International, the world's biggest photographic booth manufacturer and operator, has boosted its interim from £6p to 1.2p. The company, which is planning a move into East Germany and possibly expanding into the Soviet Union, China and India, reports a 9 per cent rise in profit before tax and depreciation of £12.8 million.

Turnover was up just 4 per cent to £52.1 million in the six months to end-October, and after £4 million of depreciation charges, interim pre-tax profits stood at £8.83 million (£8.72 million). Earnings per share were up from 8.19p to 8.57p.

## JMD shares drop as bid talks fail

By Philip Pangalos

JMD Group, the USM greeting cards to fluffy toys group, said that the talks which had been taking place since it received a bid last October, are off. Speculation was that the talks were with Southwest Resources.

Mr Keith Moss, the chief executive of JMD, said the group has decided bid talks should be formally terminated in view of the considerable time that has elapsed since the initial announcement on October 26.

He added: "Progress was dependent on the completion of certain transactions by the

other party. These have not been completed."

Mr Moss added that the board of JMD may consider re-examining the proposals should these transactions be satisfactorily completed. Meanwhile, the company is looking at a number of other possible transactions with a view to broadening the base of the group's operations.

Last October, JMD shares had jumped by 8p to 32p after the announcement was made, capitalizing the group at nearly £16 million. Yesterday, shares lost 2p to 9p, capitalizing JMD at nearer £4 million.

## Grovetree buys stake in Marians

Shares in the highly geared West End property company, Priest Marians, soared 90p to 265p on news that Grovetree Securities had bought a 15 per cent stake in the company.

Grovetree, is the stock market vehicle of Mr David Holland, the man behind the meteoric growth of another West End property company, Randworth Trust.

Mr Holland resigned as chairman of Randworth last year, shortly before the company was taken over by the American company, JMB Realty at a cost of £258 million. Only three years earlier it had been a plant hire company worth £400,000.

## Shares in Colonnade halted over false market concerns

By Jeremy Andrews

Shares in Colonnade Development Capital, the investment trust run by British & Commonwealth, were suspended at 165p yesterday because of concerns that a false market had been created when Stratagem bought a 25 per cent blocking stake.

Stratagem, though quoted, is very small and concerns are centred on whether it had obtained approval of its shareholders for the deal, as required by the Stock Exchange.

Stratagem launched an £8.2 million bid for Colonnade with the support of certain local authority and institu-

tional shareholders who were unhappy about paying venture capital fees for the management of a portfolio which is largely held in cash.

Colonnade countered with the promise of a capital reconstruction and eventual liquidation of its portfolio at its book value of 204p, 25 per cent better than Stratagem's 163p cash terms.

Stratagem's stake in Colonnade is large enough to prevent the capital reconstruction and liquidation from going through, but the shareholders' meeting to approve its purchase is not until Tuesday.

Nevertheless, Stratagem has irrevocable undertakings to vote in favour of the appropriate resolution for 51.1 per cent of the equity, so approval is a formality.

Mr Bernard Kerrison, Stratagem chairman, said: "We are upset at the amount of time and money being spent — at shareholders' expense — in making filibustering complaints. There is nothing in this suspension which will change the outcome of the bid. The other side must be deeply rattled that Colonnade shareholders are voting with their feet."

## Gestetner seeks £65m for buy

By Michael Tate, Deputy City Editor

Gestetner Holdings, the photocopier to fax machine distributor, has confirmed that it is to seek £65 million from its shareholders to help finance a \$152.2 million (£90.6 million) acquisition.

It is planning to buy the non-US operations of Nashua Corporation, its rival New Hampshire office equipment systems supplier, in an agreed cash deal.

Gestetner will also take on \$35.3 million (£21.0 million) of net debt.

The group, which has been revitalized by the Australian management which took control three years ago, is eff-

ectively offering shareholders one new share at 180p for every two shares held.

However, because regulatory approval may take longer in some of the countries where Nashua operates, shareholders will initially receive convertible loan stock, which they will swap for equity when the deal is completed, probably in July.

Because the funds will not be required immediately, the stock will be partly paid.

Only £21 million will be called now, and the balance of £44.2 million will be called once the deal is completed.

The balance of the price,

where management has been changed and strengthened.

Gestetner expects "a material improvement in profitability in 1990."

Gestetner shares dipped 5p to 208p yesterday.

This comes after a relentless slide from about 270p last summer.

Mr Greg Meigaard, the Gestetner chief executive, denied that the group had difficulty in obtaining City support for the rights issue.

"We had a fantastic response," he said.

The issue is being underwritten by Schroders.

## SE daily turnover totals £1.36bn

By Jeremy Andrews

Stock Exchange turnover averaged £1.36 billion a day in the last quarter of 1989 which spanned the mini-crash on October 16 and water privatization in December.

In its Quarterly Report, the Exchange's Quality of Market Committee noted that, while this was 16 per cent below the average in the previous quarter, it was unchanged year-on-year and the committee was pleased with the way London coped.

Mr Stephen Raven, the committee's deputy chairman, said: "The point was that we did open all day on

October 16, whereas in Germany and France the markets did not stay open. This demonstrates the importance of the continuous quote-driven system over the Continental order driven system. The joy of our market is the ability to deal continuously."

On October 16 £2.7 billion worth of shares were traded, although the average yellow strip touch for alpha stocks widened from 0.97 per cent to 1.39 per cent on that day and the largest quote size fell from 81,000 to 52,000.

When trading in water shares opened on December

12, turnover in the "package unit" of 10 water shares amounted to £1.16 billion, half the total for the entire market that day. In December as a whole, turnover in water shares came to £3.3 billion.

The report also contains conclusions about the impact of index arbitrage in London. Buying or selling a basket of stocks to exploit anomalies between the price of index futures and the value of the underlying stocks has been criticized in the United States because of volatility at "triple witching hour" when positions are closed. However, the

committee points out that institutional differences, such as the tax position of UK pension funds, have stunted the growth of index arbitrage in London.

Here it accounts for no more than 1 per cent of Stock Exchange turnover, against between 1.7 and 5.2 per cent in New York. Index arbitrage improved price efficiency, liquidity and order flow and should be encouraged by changing their liability to tax and stamp duty which stops UK pension funds playing a big role in index arbitrage as they do in the US.

## Drive to open up Eastern Europe considered

## Rank Xerox copies record with £418m

By Derek Harris, Industrial Editor

Rank Xerox, the business machines manufacturing partnership between the Rank Organisation and Xerox Corporation of the US, brought in full-year pre-tax profits of £418.2 million, just £3 million more than the 1988 record.

But compared with this increase of less than 1 per cent, an underlying profits growth trend of 18 per cent was claimed after eliminating exceptional items and currency effects.

Exceptionally, there were costs of restructuring its systems business, and a larger-than-usual payment for research and development went to Xerox Corporation, which apparently needed more reported profits for tax reasons.

Annual savings of £100 million, to be fully felt next year, were also promised by Rank Xerox arising from a new distribution system. This is being centralized in Holland to serve the emerging single European market on a just-in-time basis.

The savings will go "partly" to profits.



Sales show solid progress: Fournier

Rank Xerox is increasingly developing software, with the need to spend on research and development, while hardware is being left more to Xerox. One effect will be the running down of some British hardware capacity, which will to an extent be replaced by work on software.

An initiative to open up the East European market, seen potentially as a

vast market for business machines like photocopiers and printers, is also being considered.

Rank Xerox is a market leader in the Eastern bloc and equipment and personnel, to inject expertise, is likely to be shipped out at a cost which might rise to as much as £8 million.

Rank Xerox sales at £2.5 billion in the year to end-October were up 10 per cent. M. Bernard Fournier, managing director of Rank Xerox, said: "This represents further solid progress and is due in significant part to increased equipment sales, particularly in the high volume reprographics and centralized printing business areas."

Rank Organisation, which has a 49 per cent stake in Rank Xerox, received £160 million from the partnership profits, up 6 per cent. Earnings at Fuji Xerox, a partnership between Rank Xerox and Fuji Film, were up about 6 per cent, while the operation in West Germany returned its first profit in five years with DM46 million (£16 million).

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# NewsCorp profit hit by Sky loss and interest bill

By Colin Campbell

Pre-tax profits of The News Corporation, the worldwide media group headed by Mr Rupert Murdoch, fell by 44.6 per cent from Aus\$330.6 million to Aus\$183.3 million in the six months ending December 31.

The slide resulted from a higher net interest charge, inclusion of Aus\$103 million (£50.5 million) of losses at Sky Television and the effects of the Ansett airline pilots' dispute in Australia.

NewsCorp says half-time revenues rose by 4.5 per cent to Aus\$4.12 million with that from the United States exceeding Aus\$2.23 billion, and that despite slightly reduced volumes, profits in core businesses rose as a result of operating efficiencies and improved margins.

NewsCorp's interim dividend is maintained at 5 Australian cents per share, and the shares rose in London by 14p to 484p.

Group net interest which was charged against operating profit, jumped from Aus\$325.5 million to Aus\$440.8 million, and associated companies - which previously made a profit contribution of Aus\$60.4 million - showed a half-time loss of Aus\$25.7 million.

At the net level, and before abnormal items, NewsCorp reports profits on an equity-accounted basis of Aus\$136.3 million compared with Aus\$260.3 million.

After taking into account abnormal items, the bottom line shows profits of Aus\$152 million against Aus\$439.2 million previously.

Results of News International, the group's British subsidiary - owner of *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *News of the World*, *The Sun*, and *Today* - show a pre-tax loss of £65.4 million com-

pared with a previous interim pre-tax profit of £41.7 million on a turnover of £380 million (£378.4 million).

The downturn was largely caused by a jump from £39.3 million to £100.67 million in net interest paid and £50.5 million of losses associated with Sky Television.

Profits from newspapers and magazines exceeded those earned in the corresponding period last year, while losses at Sky Television - made up of an initial four months' trading losses and amortization of start-up costs - "are in line with our long term business plan," the board says.

With the exception of Sky Television, operating profits since December continue to exceed those of last year, News International says.

Sky Television is now seen in more than 1.2 million homes and the installation of receiving equipment and dishes is "on schedule and

accelerating." News International adds that the subscription service for Sky began on February 5 with 250,000 paying subscribers.

At the net attributable level News International reports a £57.9 million loss compared with a previous £44.8 million profit.

Holders of News International's special dividend shares are entitled to the starting equivalent of the dividend paid by NewsCorp and therefore receive 2.2367p a share (2.5575p a share) for the interim period, payable April 20.

News International shares were unchanged at 279p.

In a review of its world-wide interests, NewsCorp, News International's parent company, says US television stations showed considerable improvement and results from Fox Broadcasting were higher. The Twentieth Century Fox Film division fell

## Jameel raises bid for Hartwell

By Martin Walker

Jameel Group, the Saudi Arabia-owned company, has launched an intended knock-out bid in its attempted takeover of Hartwell, the motor distributor, with a final cash offer of £172 million or 155p a share.

But the raised bid, compared with the £151 million offered at the start of the year, met with an immediate rejection from Mr Peter Higgins, the Hartwell chairman, who dismissed it as "totally inadequate."

The bidder is also offering 142.1p for each Hartwell convertible preference share, and there is a loan note alternative.

Jameel, through its Oakhill offshoot, was in the market bolstering its case yesterday with purchases which took its total holding to more than 29 per cent, with more than 45 per cent of the convertibles, as the Hartwell share price jumped 10p to 156p.

"We really came to the conclusion that we've got to try and fill this in one clean bid of the size," said Mr Rupert Carington, the Oakhill chairman. He attacked Hartwell's "extremely fast, unconsidered and panicky reaction," which appeared on the Stock Exchange screens barely an hour after the revised offer.

Jameel is claiming its new bid offers a prospective price earnings multiple of 18 times Hartwell's own 1990 profits forecast. For its part, the Oxford motor dealer claims that after stripping out the value of its properties, a revaluation of which formed one of the main planks of its defence, the offer gives a multiple of only 13.2 times its motor and oil distribution businesses.

"This is the third biggest retailer in the country - it's got a franchise portfolio you couldn't build again," a spokesman said.

About 10.3 per cent of the company is held by its own pension fund and directors have about 2.5 per cent. Jameel in particular needs to win around two big institutional holders, M&G and Mercantile Credit, with 17 per cent between them.

But observers believe Jameel, which spent two years building up an 18 per cent stake in Hartwell and which has made strenuous efforts to enter the British car market, is likely to retain its holding long-term to exert pressure on Hartwell even if the new bid fails.

## COMMENT David Brewerton

# Ridley's team hold key to Eurotunnel progress

The 10-strong consortium of construction companies building the Channel tunnel have mounted their most open challenge to the authority of their client Eurotunnel in the stormy history of the project. By refusing to sign the agreement reached in principle last month, they have created a situation where one party or another faces a humiliating climb-down.

Until TML does sign, no fresh funds will be provided by the banks backing the project, and if the ink is not dry inside two weeks, Eurotunnel will run out of cash. The terms of the master agreements between the two parties are not crystal clear. But if there is an unscheduled halt to construction work, the lawyers for Eurotunnel's shareholders and the banks, who have between them sunk almost £2 billion so far, can only begin proceedings to recover their outlay. This is brinkmanship of the highest order.

It is clear TML has mounted a campaign to remove Mr Alastair Morton, the British co-chairman, to a position where he has little or no involvement with the building of the link. A force play on this scale is probably without precedent. Unfortunately for the builders, Mr Morton has won the backing of the joint board of Eurotunnel which has swung its weight behind him. If it was part of the TML plan to isolate him from the rest of his colleagues, the strategy has failed.

It is inconceivable the Eurotunnel board could back down from the management structure announced yesterday and still retain credibility with the bankers and the company's shareholders. If there is a compromise to be reached, then it lies in the nature of the role to be undertaken by Tony Ridley and the two

appointees beneath him who will be in charge of the construction project.

Eurotunnel has two other key tasks to perform aside from the building of the tunnel. Fresh financing of around £1.5 billion has to be arranged, partly from the banks, and partly from Eurotunnel's shareholders. Also, a new management team and structure for operating the tunnel once it is up and running, have to be devised and implemented.

Eurotunnel must persuade TML that Dr Ridley's team has the autonomy and authority to attend to the project. But in accepting this, TML will to all the world appear to have climbed down from a confrontation largely of its own making.

## An independent lady

As an old Bank of England hand, Sir Kit McMahon's views on independent central banking are certainly worth a hearing. Last night, he made clear that, like the departed Chancellor Lawson, he favours giving the Old Lady more rope, especially as European Monetary Union looms.

That does not mean independence without accountability. Sir Kit would like Threadneedle Street made accountable to Parliament rather than the Government. One wonders whether Sir Kit's ideas on independence stem from his time at the Bank. After all, it was there he probably came across a 1977 Conservative strategy paper, "The Right Approach to the Economy," which plainly called for a "more independent role" for the Bank. It cannot have been Mrs Thatcher who penned it, can it?

## Hard Swiss are shameless

Any hope that UBS Phillips & Drew would be shamed into following the lead of NatWest Investment Bank to make offers of compensation to those misled during the infamous Blue Arrow rights issue have evaporated. The London-based securities operation has decided against making any such payments. National Westminster Bank is obviously a softer touch by far than the hard-headed Union Bank of Switzerland, proud owner of UBS Phillips & Drew.

Natwest and UBS P&D are equally caught up with the "Blue Arrow affair," although the latter is seeking to make the distinction that it was acting merely as an agent for Blue Arrow and points out that the disgraceful episode has never been tagged the "UBS Phillips & Drew affair."

There is a valid argument that questions such as compensation should await the outcome of criminal proceed-

ings and that the interests of all parties might be better served when the wheels of justice have ground to their conclusion.

But it is equally clear that UBS P&D was not motivated merely by high principle, but also by the unpalatable idea put forward by NatWest Investment Bank that the two parties should share the burden of compensation in equal proportions. UBS P&D was prepared to have talks with the institutional shareholders and with NatWest Investment Bank, but it was not prepared to go 50-50 on compensation. Just what proportion of the burden the Swiss were willing to shoulder, they will not say.

The whole point of offering compensation at this time is to try to avoid expensive litigation in the future, and that will only be avoided if the institutional shareholders feel they have had a square deal. At the moment, so far as UBS P&D is concerned, they have no deal at all.

## C&G tops £100m for first time

By Lindsay Cook  
Family Money Editor

More mortgage rate rises look likely early next week, with most building societies waiting for the Halifax Building Society, the largest lender, to make its move first.

Societies need to have their new savers' rates in place when the Abbey National increases the returns on its accounts by 0.75 per cent from March 1. Mr Andrew Longhurst, managing director of the Cheltenham & Gloucester, said it would be putting up its mortgage and savers' rates from March 1, but had to decide by how much.

The society, which yesterday reported breaking above the £100 million pre-tax profits level for the first time, said getting the savers' rate right was most important. "The mortgage rise is retail rate-driven. This is the most competitive area at the moment," said Mr Longhurst.

Profits rose 26.4 per cent to £107.8 million while assets grew 28.3 per cent to £7.27 billion. Profits after tax were up 28.4 per cent at £70.5 million.

The society's management expense ratio increased by 1p per £100 of assets to 73p, compared with an industry average of £1.17.

It was this cost-efficiency which allowed the society to offer the best building society savings rate on its postal instant access account - currently 11.5 per cent on sums above £2,500 - while offering a 1 per cent discount to new borrowers, said Mr Longhurst.

Its retail savings had been boosted by the London Share account launched last April with most of the society's new money invested in the account.

The proposed merger with the Guardian Building Society, announced last November, will strengthen its postal investment operations. It should take place in mid-April, subject to confirmation by the Building Societies Commission.



Mortgage rise due: Andrew Longhurst announces results at the Savoy yesterday

## Sir Gordon to detail BAA complaints

By Harvey Elliott, Air Correspondent

Sir Gordon Borrie, director-general of the Office of Fair Trading, is to give detailed evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission about the "many complaints" he has received about BAA, the airports operator.

But he has decided not to ask the MMC to carry out an immediate monopoly investigation into BAA's pricing policies.

Such an inquiry, he said yesterday, "would have been timely" but because a regular

five-year review of BAA's airports is to begin this year any complaints could be considered within that review.

"The wide-ranging complaints I have received are best considered as part of a truly comprehensive review," said Sir Gordon.

"When this is in progress I will be giving evidence to the MMC in order to ensure that the commission takes account of the issues these complaints have raised."

In the meantime BAA has

given undertakings to the OFT on a wide range of changes which have been subject to complaints in the last two years.

In particular, bus and coach operators have attacked BAA for introducing new charges for these of their airports.

One bus operator faced having to pay £31,000 a year instead of £106, and hotels providing courtesy coaches to the airport a bill of £180,000 instead of £16,000.

These price increases are

now being phased in over three years. Other complaints received by Mr Borrie include car parking, duty free prices, and a lack of competition between retail, banking and catering outlets.

It was in the light of a detailed policy document published yesterday in which BAA promised to improve customer service and quality that Sir Gordon said he would not now be asking the MMC to carry out a monopoly investigation.

## He won't miss the Swiss

Barry Aling, one of the City's top men when it comes to Far Eastern markets, is on the move. And it must be enough to make his former employers - Swiss Bank Corporation - nervous. For when Aling, aged 39, arrived there in 1986 from Wico - then a subsidiary of Exco - he brought with him no fewer than 84 of his former colleagues during the ensuing six months. Called Operation Daybreak, it followed Exco's refusal to sell the Wico business to its management.

"They came from offices all over the world and it was quite fun," recalls Aling. "But I wouldn't want to do it again."

He became a managing director of SBCI, based in London, running its Far Eastern securities business. The catalyst in his decision to leave came, he reveals, from the departure in December of Andrew Large who, as general manager, was the man responsible for its investment banking operation. "The culture then changed," says Aling. "The Swiss moved in. Not only am I against the Swiss, but I'm also against large organizations. I'm of the opinion that these large bank takeovers of City firms have not worked, by and large." On ice for three months, Aling plans in due course to launch his own firm with a "handful of practitioners who can put up enough capital to get up and running" and one or two institutions as minority partners. His motto? "To make half and have a laugh."

## THE TIMES CITY DIARY

### Bernard bates at falcons

Bernard Fournier, the 51-year-old Frenchman who is managing director of Bank Xerox - best known for its photocopyers - is more excited than most about sales prospects in Eastern Europe. For at the moment business machinery sold by the company into the Eastern bloc, where it claims to be market leader, has to be paid for through counter-trade. And Fournier recalls that among the more unusual items taken

in exchange was a consignment of camel saddles. But Bank Xerox makes a point of not taking anything like that as collateral - it has already found a buyer - the saddles went to Arab customers. That was not, however, the only reason it turned down a number of Iron Curtain falcons. "We thought it would also be bad for our image if there were any problems on route," says a Fournier aide. "And anyway they weren't trained."

### Kitsch lovers

It is not only holidaymakers who buy them but businessmen, eager to prove that they were thinking of their loved

ones while away and, at times, to prove where they've been. So says *Holiday Which?* after doing a round-up of some of the tackiest tourist souvenirs from round the world. Some people must, of course, actually like cow bells from Switzerland, thermometers in the shape of the Eiffel Tower, Mexican wicker donkeys, Statue of Liberty sunglasses and stuffed Loch Ness monsters. If no one did, they would not, presumably, be manufactured. Yet who could want, after making the pilgrimage trail to Santiago de la Compostela in Northern Spain, to buy a memento reproducing a religious sculpture set inside a tiny TV set which lights up and plays music? Possibly the same people who hand over their furo for a plastic Venetian gondola which lights up, revolves, plays a tune and has a ballerina prancing on deck.



Think of it as an extension to your bank vault.

## Thrash clash

As almost every investment analyst and fund manager in the Square Mile left their desks at 5 pm sharp last night, so as not to miss a single minute of the Society of Investment Analysts' annual dinner at the Grosvenor House, only those specialists who follow the Norwegian market were noticeably absent from the occasion. Earning itself a reputation for being inconsiderate, Norsk Hydro, the largest industrial company in Norway, chose last night to present its results to the City. And some 37 analysts apparently opted, conscientiously, for the Norsk evening, thus missing the biggest and most sociable thrash of their working year. "But we have tried hard to make up for it," says a spokesman for Norsk. Norsk was, he revealed, laying on a lavish dinner at the Waldorf Hotel instead - and only one or two of their guests had forewarned them that they would be leaving promptly to join the festivities at the Grosvenor House. With Norsk being one of the top three salmon farmers in the United Kingdom, the spokesman added, "who knows, by having a smoked salmon starter analysts may even have been contributing to Norsk's profits for next year."

Griffin seen scrawled on a wall in the City: "Happiness is the pursuit of something, not the catching of it." And written neatly beneath it: "Like chasing the last bus on a rainy night."

Carol Leonard

"I have been lucky enough to drive most of the world's fastest sports cars, and none of them have the same overall balance of speed, comfort and refinement that this new 300ZX exhibits" Ian Kuah, *World Sports Cars*

The new 300ZX will arrive in the UK this spring.

It has been described by leading motoring journalists as one of the world's finest sports cars.

The 300ZX will be on display at special all-day previews around the country as detailed below.

Viewing can take place up to 9.30 p.m.

We invite you to examine the new thoroughbred that will set the standards for supercars in the nineties.



16th/17th February  
LONDON SOUTH EAST  
ANCASTER GARAGES  
61 Croydon Road, Penze, London  
Tel: 01-778 8881

19th/20th February  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE  
AFG MAPPERLEY  
565 Woodborough Road, Mapperley, Nottingham  
Tel: 0602 603603

23rd/24th February  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE  
AFG SHEFFIELD  
108 Penistone Road, Sheffield  
Tel: 0742 852851

18th/19th February  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
AFG HIGH WYCOMBE  
330-336 London Road, High Wycombe  
Tel: 0494 463737

20th/21st February  
MIDDLESEX  
HERDS OF SOUTHAL  
Merrick Road, Southall  
Tel: 01-574 6768

24th/25th February  
HERTFORDSHIRE  
DAN PERKINS  
Eleanor Cross Road, Waltham Cross  
Tel: 0992 711177

19th/20th February  
STAFFORD  
PINKSTONE OF STOKE  
449 Newcastle Road, Newcastle-Under-Lyme  
Tel: 0782 711400

22nd/23rd February  
OXFORDSHIRE  
JOHN MISKINS  
Southern Road, Banbury  
Tel: 0295 268491

25th/26th February  
WEST YORKSHIRE  
AFG LEEDS CENTRAL  
9 Regent Street, Leeds  
Tel: 0532 454647

**NISSAN**  
know how.  
NISSAN UK LIMITED WORTHING SUSSEX

The 300ZX is the latest in a line of recent Nissan success stories.

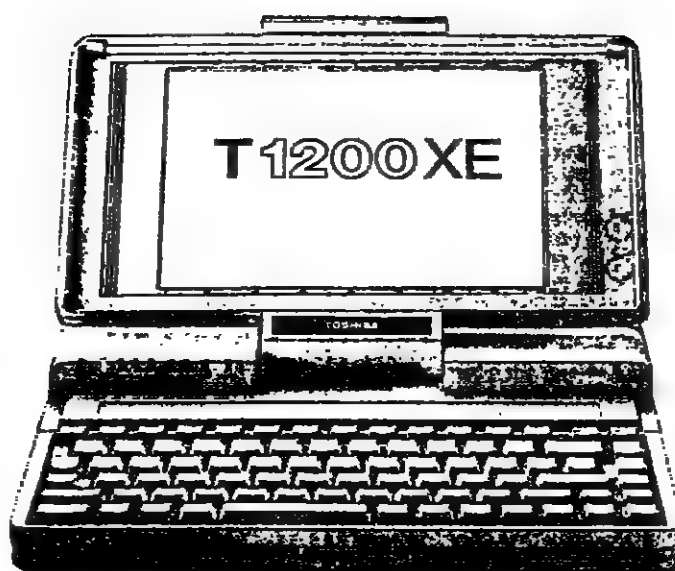
We invite you to also view the 140mph 200SX coupé; the Maxima - a high performance executive saloon and the innovative Prairie 7-seater and 4x4 Estates.



## Art or state of the Art?

## Winner takes all.

The new Toshiba T1200XE combines the good looks and handy dimensions of a notebook computer with fast-working industry-standard 286™ performance. Effective power, user-friendly functions and stylish design are its hallmarks. You can carry all your programs and data with you on the 20 MB hard disk. With a modem, you get all modern remote communication services at your fingertips. And thanks to its excellent screen, ergonomic keyboard and advanced Toshiba features, the T1200XE makes it that much easier for you to perform at your peak. So don't compromise. With the Toshiba T1200XE you're a winner. Find out why Toshiba are market-leaders for portable



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Position:

Company:

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Tel:

Preferred Supplier:

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**TOSHIBA**

هكذا من الأصل

Newman  
to wipe  
and fund

Hongkong Bank  
pay £92.8m to  
Lloyds of Canada

Mortgage  
assistance  
City rem  
second  
world tal

NAB completes  
Yorkshire buy



# Newman £32m call to wipe out debt and fund purchases

By Melinda Wittstock

Newman Tunks, the acquisitive door and window fittings maker keen to expand in the US and Europe, has called on its shareholders to raise £32.3 million net by way of a rights issue.

The move, which together with yesterday's £10 million sale of its non-core gas controls businesses, will obliterate the Birmingham-based company's borrowings and leave it with £6 million cash to fund acquisitions.

It is issuing 22.1 million new ordinary shares at 150p each, offering ordinary shareholders one for every four held and convertible preference shareholders one ordinary share at 150p for every eight convertible shares held. The cash call is fully underwritten by Barclays de Zoete Wedd.

Shares in Newman Tunks, which last came to the market to raise capital through a rights issue in 1985, fell 10p to 174p.

Mr Geoff Gahan, who yesterday took over as group chief executive from Mr Doug Rogers, who has resigned because of his wife's illness, said the £6 million left over after eliminating £35 million

of borrowings would be put towards acquisitions.

He said the Newman Tunks, which spent £50 million on acquisitions last year though it is only capitalized at about £150 million, is currently in preliminary negotiations for one acquisition in the US and two in Europe.

Mr Gahan had spent half his week as a non-executive director of Newman Tunks for the past three years and the other half running Jordan Gahan, his private plastic and aluminium dye-casting company.

He said Newman Tunks was particularly keen on "getting into the German backyard without them getting into ours."

The company is also investigating opportunities in Eastern Europe.

Newman Tunks, which operates primarily in the commercial property sector, said it was confident that its performance in the current year would be "satisfactory" despite the property slump, given that close to half the group's activity is now outside Britain.

Dividend payouts will be

maintained at the same level - 9.3p in the year to end-October.

The sale of the three profitable gas controls businesses - Jeavons Engineering Ltd, Bowden Brothers & Co and James Southerton Ltd - is in line with the group's continuing policy of disposing of all non-core operations and is likely to foreshadow one or two more disposals soon.

The company has sold the businesses to International Gas Apparatus Ltd, a subsidiary of American Meter which is part of the Ruhrgas Group, for £8.55 million plus a further £500,000 if certain undisclosed requirements are met.

At completion, Newman Tunks will also receive £947,000 of inter-company debt.

Mr Tim Frankland, the chairman, who is due to resign in 1991, will step down after the group's annual meeting to become deputy chairman. The move will allow Mr Rogers to become the non-executive chairman.

Mr Gahan will become a non-executive director of his own company.

# Storehouse to close four Heal's



Reorganizing furniture business: Michael Julien will also announce closure of 10 Habitat

Storehouse is closing four of its six Heal's furniture shops as part of the reorganization of its ailing furniture business (Gillian Bowditch writes).

Storehouse, where Mr Michael Julien is chief executive, is also due to announce the closure of 10 Habitat stores soon.

Up to 90 jobs will go at Heal's and head office. The closure will cost the group about £3 million before tax, which will be treated as an exceptional item in the accounts. The stores to go are in Reading, Berkshire; West Thurrock, Essex; Croydon, Surrey; and Kingston-upon-Thames.

The two remaining stores in Guildford, Surrey, and London's Tottenham Court Road account for about 74 per cent of Heal's total turnover.

A spokesman for the group said the closures would return the Heal's chain to profitability. They reflected the severe downturn in the furniture market, particularly in the south-east. The shops will be closed in the next four to six weeks.

As yet, no decision has been made on which Habitat stores are to close, although the one at West Thurrock is almost certain to go. Habitat has 56 stores in Britain, plus five units within REIS that are almost certain to go. The earmarked stores will be a mixture of out-of-town and high street.

Habitat and Heal's made an operating loss of £2.8 million last year and the division is expected to lose about £11 million this year.

# Fairline falls 148p after bid talks fail

By Melinda Wittstock

Shares in Fairline Boats sank 148p to 695p after the Northamptonshire luxury boat builder announced that talks which may have led to a full bid for the company have been terminated.

The unexpected approach, which sent Fairline's shares up 112p to 835p when it was revealed early last month, failed to materialize into an offer after the unnamed company decided to acquire another company instead.

Mr Sam Newington, the Fairline chairman and managing director, said: "It was nothing to do with our trading performance or the price we wanted." With his family, he owns 55 per cent of Fairline Boats.

Fairline, which says its orders are well ahead of last year, was negotiating to sell the company for slightly more than its £29.2 million value the day the bid approach pushed its shares to 835p.

Mr Newington said the group was not looking for another buyer. He added that work is shortly due to start on a factory to build 60R boats that will sell for about £400,000.

He said he remains optimistic about sales, despite the economic downturn.

# Hongkong Bank to pay £92.8m for Lloyds of Canada

From Lulu Ye, Hong Kong

The Canadian offshoot of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp has agreed to acquire Lloyds Bank of Canada for Can\$190 million (£92.8 million).

The deal will make its subsidiary, the Hongkong Bank of Canada, the largest foreign bank in the country.

"We view the merger of the two banks as an excellent opportunity to balance our operation by expanding in central and eastern Canada," said Mr Jim Cleave, Hongkong Bank president and chief executive.

The bank, which also owns the Bank of British Columbia, is one of the 30 largest banks in the world, with total assets of more than Can\$6.1 billion. Following the merger with Lloyds, which has assets of Can\$4.5 billion, it will replace Citibank as the leading overseas bank, with a strong presence in eastern Canada.

Hongkong Bank has headquarters in Vancouver and 49 of its 61 branches in western Canada, while Lloyds has most of its 54 branches in Ontario and Quebec. "Our

commitment to British Columbia will not be diminished by an enhanced national presence," said Mr Cleave. "It's simply good business to be well diversified."

Mr Philip Harris, spokesman of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, said the purchase would be paid for by notes payable in 1991.

The two banks and the regulatory authorities are discussing whether there should be interest payments on the notes.

Analysts yesterday gave their approval to the deal, in which Hongkong Bank's cash flow will remain unaffected until next year.

"The acquisition is a sound one. It reduces competition for the Hongkong Bank in Canada's private banking sector, and will strengthen its asset base," said Mr Keith Wu, banking economist at Citicorp Scrimgeour Vickers.

In the year to end-October, Hongkong Bank reported net profits of Can\$34.8 million, while Lloyds unveiled losses of Can\$35.5 million after Third World debt provisions.

1 9 8 9 R E S U L T S

# Dividend increase for seventh successive year.

Record year's historical cost profit, boosted by stock holding gains of £383 million.

Exploration and Production benefits from higher crude oil prices, offset by lower production and increased taxation.

Record year's profit for Chemicals.

Substantial progress with sale of coal interests in fourth quarter.

Fourth quarterly dividend brings total for the year to 14.90 pence per share - up from 13.50 pence in 1988.

Financial highlights	1989	1988
Group profit after taxation		
Historical cost	£1,744m	£1,210m
Replacement cost*	£1,361m	£1,437m
Extraordinary profit after taxation	£390m	-
Dividends per Ordinary Share	14.90p	13.50p

\*EXCLUDES STOCK HOLDING GAINS AND LOSSES.

The Directors of The British Petroleum Company plc accept responsibility for the contents of this advertisement, which has been approved by Ernst & Young, a firm authorised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to carry on investment business. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future.



# Mortgage minefield assistance

The full details of the latest mortgage rate rises, including who will have to pay how much extra and when, will be included in the Family Money section on Saturday.

There will be guidance for people who cannot meet the latest rise and for those who are among the increasing number of people with mortgage arrears.

Also under scrutiny will be the new breed of landlords of-

THE TIMES  
ON SATURDAY  
IN COLOUR

fering brand new properties to rent, and there is a study of unit trust pricing.

Find out what rights investors have when the company they have invested in decides to go private. See why charities may suffer under planned changes to the give-as-you-earn scheme and why caution has to be exercised in the world of investment trusts.

Also included in the section are news of the latest developments and products in personal finance.

# City rents second in world table

By Our City Staff

Only Tokyo beats London in the league of city office rents and charges, according to the latest survey by Richard Ellis, the international property specialist.

Office rents and charges in Tokyo total £127.46 per square foot, keeping it at the top of the league. The City of London is second at £89.60 and the West End of London third at £85.70.

Two other British cities, Manchester and Glasgow, figure in the league. Manchester is 19th at £25.50 and Glasgow is 20th at £25.42.

Mr Ted Webster, the managing partner of Richard Ellis Scotland, said Glasgow was well placed to meet increased European competition with only Brussels and Amsterdam offering lower costs.

"There is still exceptionally strong demand for quality office space in the city which, at this stage, shows no signs of tailing off," he said. But, he added, the rates burden of 39 per cent of the total charge in Glasgow was still high.

# NAB completes Yorkshire buy

Mr Graham Sunderland, the general manager of Yorkshire Bank, has warmly welcomed the bank's new Australian parent company.

Mr Sunderland said he was looking forward to working with the National Australia Bank.

The bank yesterday completed the £1 billion takeover of Yorkshire Bank, which is Britain's most profitable.

Mr Sunderland, in his annual review, commented: "To our customers, I can pledge that the bank's essential character will not change, and, together with our new owner, we shall strive to improve

further the quality of our services."

He added: "I welcome our new owner most warmly."

Last year was an "exceptional" one for Yorkshire.

It produced strong profits, record growth in business lending and also the end of a 79-year partnership with former shareholders.

Pre-tax profits for the year to end-December were £113.1 million.

This was an increase of 12.8 per cent over the same period last year.

The group's total resources for the year rose by 27.3 per cent to more than £4 billion.







sheds for a living.

HE came back with several orders, an improved knowledge of French and German and now employs 24 people.

(WHEN it comes to making soft, spongy  
bread French bakers seem unable to

rise to the occasion.)

THEY insisted that each of their directors and senior executives should become fluent in at least one of their target languages.

ALL their other employees were also encouraged to take language lessons. In the firm's own time.

THIS firm is not a vast multinational.

It employs precisely eighteen people.

SMALL British businesses like these are now swinging their sling shots all over the EC.

**SOME** are seeking franchisees or agents.

OTHERS affiliate companies with whom  
they can exchange business.

OF course, many small EC businesses are  
doing the same over here.

**WHICH** is why you cannot ignore the  
**T.** Single Market in your business plan.

PERHAPS the best way to start arming  
yourself is to talk to your accountant,  
bank manager or your solicitor.

FOR more ammunition, try your Trade Association, Chamber of Commerce, Local Enterprise Agency or your local business club. (Have you joined one?)

**EACH may have invaluable advice.**

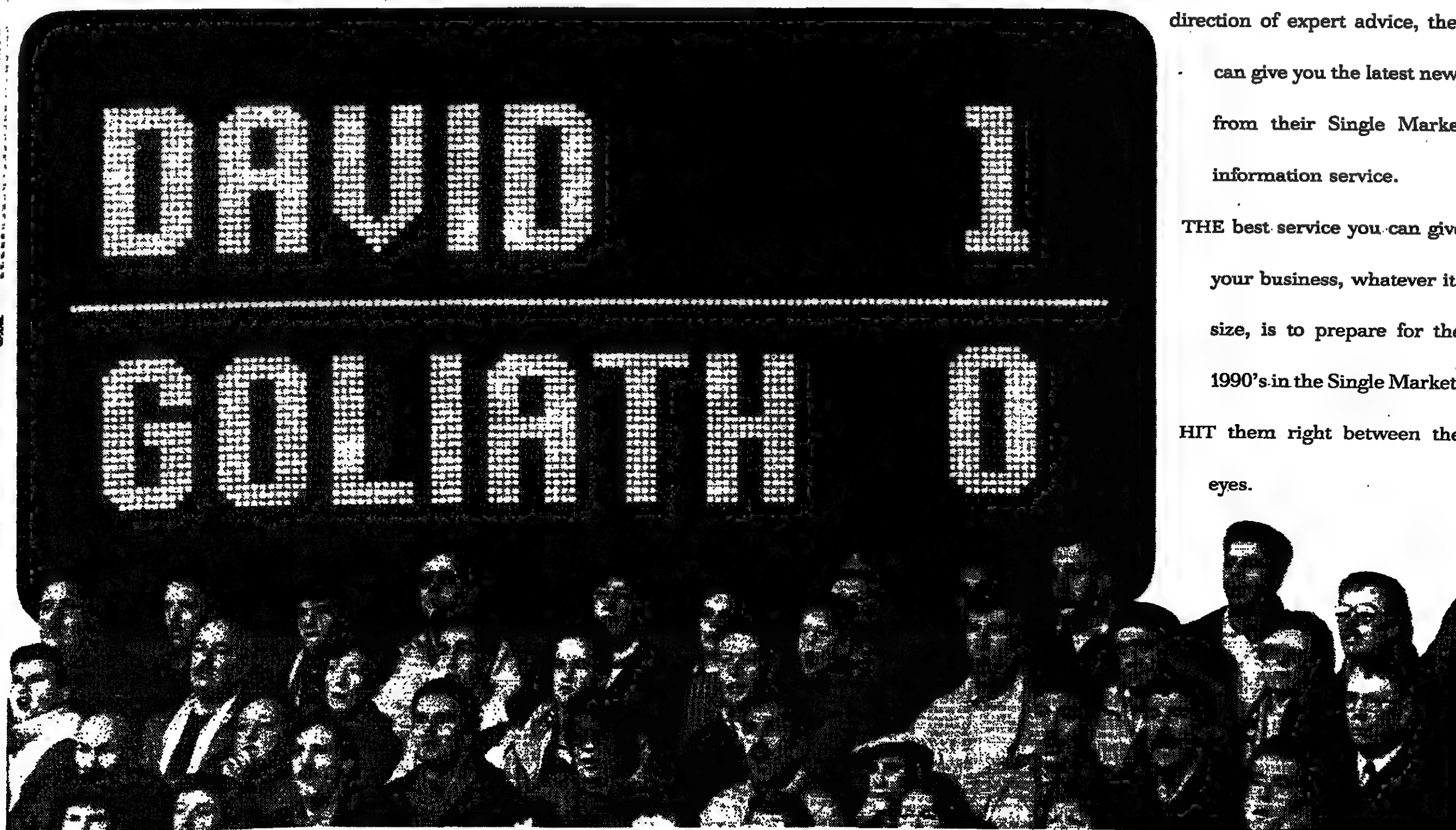
AND if your aim is still unsure, ring the  
DTI Hotline on 01-200 1992, or your  
local DTI office.

AS well as being able to point you in the direction of expert advice, they

can give you the latest news  
from their Single Market  
information service.

**THE best service you can give  
your business, whatever its  
size, is to prepare for the  
1990's in the Single Market.**

HIT them right between the  
eyes.



**THE SINGLE MARKET IS HERE NOW. WHERE ARE YOU?**



## FOREIGN EXCHANGES

Exchange Index compared with 1985 was up at 98.8 (delta range 98-99.7).

## STERLING SPOT AND FORWARD RATES

Market rates for February 26

## OTHER STERLING RATES

Australia a/cmt\* 4994.07-4993.81

2.257-2.256.22

Bahrain dirr 0.8345-0.8345

Brazil cruzeiro 41.05449-41.0544

Canada dollar 0.7660-0.7660

Finland markka 1984-1984

France franc 16.537-16.537

Hong Kong dollar 12.3435-12.3424

India rupee 28.57-28.57

Indonesia Rp 1.157-1.157

Malaysia ringgit 4.5731-4.5776

Mexico peso 4595-4895

Netherlands guilder 2.0017-2.0017

Saudi Arabian riyal 3.2115-3.2835

Singapore dollar 3.1577-3.1574

South Africa rand 4.3337-4.3814

U.S. dollar 1.618-1.618

\*Lloyd's Bank, Rates supplied by

Cable and Barclays Bank GTO

## DOLLAR SPOT RATES

United Kingdom	1.5780-1.5780	Denmark	6.4810-6.4880	Italy	1247.0-1248.0
France	16.537-16.540	France	16.537-16.537	Japan (Yen)	35.70-35.70
Germany	2.0017-2.0017	Germany	2.0017-2.0017	Hong Kong	7.76-7.76
Spain	165.48-165.48	Netherlands	1.6520-1.6520	India	147.80-148.00
Sweden	1.2077-1.2077	Sweden	1.2077-1.2077	Indonesia	1650.0-1650.0
Switzerland	1.44-1.44	Japan	144.40-144.50	Australia	11.82-11.81
Norway	6.9175-6.9205				

Rate supplied by Barclays Bank GTO and Excl.

## ONEY MARKETS

Base Rates % Clearing Banks 15 Finance Hour 15%

Discount Market Rates

Overnight High/Low 16% 13% Week Rates: 14%

1 month 12% 12% 12% 12% 12% 12%

Buying 2 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

Selling 2 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

2 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

3 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

4 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

5 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

6 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

7 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

8 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

9 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

10 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

11 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

12 month 14% 14% 13% 14% 14% 14%

Local Authority Deposits

2 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

3 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

4 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

5 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

6 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

7 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

8 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

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16 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

17 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

18 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

19 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

20 1/2% 14% 13% 13% 14% 14%

### THIRD MARKET

[illegible]

Close	Vol	Open	High
100.00	100	100.00	100.00

Open						Low	Close	Vol	Open						High	Low	Close	Vol
PT-SE 100									Three Month ECU									
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	85.50	85.50	85.50	85.50	85.50	85.50	2419		
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	18			Mar 90	85.50	85.50	85.50	85.50	85.50	85.50	2419		
Three Month Straddle									US Treasury Bond									
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	94.08	94.08	94.08	94.08	94.08	94.08	2941		
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	94.08	94.08	94.08	94.08	94.08	94.08	2941		
Three Month Eurodollar									Long Gilt									
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	97.06	97.06	97.06	97.06	97.06	97.06	2941		
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	97.06	97.06	97.06	97.06	97.06	97.06	2941		
Three Month Eurodollar									Japanese Govt Bond									
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	95.50	95.50	95.50	95.50	95.50	95.50	423		
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	95.50	95.50	95.50	95.50	95.50	95.50	423		
Three Month Eurodollar									German Govt Bond									
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	92.52	92.52	92.52	92.52	92.52	92.52	2498		
Jun 90	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	233.00	23304			Mar 90	92.52	92.52	92.52	92.52	92.52	92.52	2498		

## COMMODITIES

LONDON FOEX				LONDON METAL EXCHANGE			
COCOA				Aluminum			
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
COFFEE				Copper			
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
COPPER				Gold			
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
CORN				Iron Ore			
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
CORN				Lead			
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
Jun 90	654.00	654.00	654.00	Jun 90	1387.00	1387.00	1387.00
CORN				Nickel			

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**WICH BONTI EDGE**

**By Michael Seely, Racing Correspondent**

**The eventual winner Orr Nobby (Brendan Powell) leads Southernair (Declan Murphy) in the Loughborough Handicap Chase at Sandown Park yesterday**

## ATHLETICS

**From John Woodcock**  
**John@msb.org**

**From Alan Lee**

- SCOREBOARD FROM TRINIDAD -

**From Richard Streeton**  
**Honoree**

### Tour details

**MOTOR SPORT**

**By David Powell, Athletics Correspondent**

Macroom  
Following

SANDS

Course specialist

EDINBURGH

THE TIMES RACING







## STUDENT SPORT

## Television tonic for officials of Games

**Kicking back:** Thorburn, whose playing career has lurched in and out of controversy

هكذا من الأصل

1985. Birmingham 2, Leeds 0; post-  
 season Loughborough v Swansea. Netball  
 1984-85: Loughborough 42, Nottingham  
 34; 34: postponed Birmingham v  
 Swadlow. Representative match, foot-  
 ball UAU 8, BPFA 0. Barclays SPFA  
 championships: Rugby Union, quarter-  
 final, Bristol 27, City 13. Women's  
 hockey: Oxford 1, Brigham 4.

## Dalton's decision

1985. Birmingham 2, Leeds 0; post-  
 season Loughborough v Swansea. Netball  
 1984-85: Loughborough 42, Nottingham  
 34; 34: postponed Birmingham v  
 Swadlow. Representative match, foot-  
 ball UAU 8, BPFA 0. Barclays SPFA  
 championships: Rugby Union, quarter-  
 final, Bristol 27, City 13. Women's  
 hockey: Oxford 1, Brigham 4.

Meanwhile, Carter made clear that a former employee, Alex Ray, had not lost his job, but had resigned.

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# Ranking positions make a nonsense of Durie's patriotism

By Andrew Longmore, Tennis Correspondent

There was something symbolic about the Moët and Chandon British ranking awards yesterday. Both the respective No. 1s, Jeremy Bates and Monique Javer, had influenza, which is entirely appropriate because the whole ranking process is rife with disease.

The problem is that no one, least of all the players, seems to know how the rankings are calculated. The men were under the impression that they were being measured by a quarterly average, but the computer rankings, they were not. The women thought the final decision lay with the Lawn Tennis Association's ranking committee. It did not. Both ranking lists were taken from the computer positions at the end of the year.

There can be few arguments about the men's rankings. Bates was consistently the best British player through the year, was unbeaten in Davis Cup and is now ranked exactly 10 places higher than the British No. 2, Nick Brown. Chris Bailey, the No. 3, can legitimately argue that he was ranked above Brown for much of the year and therefore on a

quarterly average would have been No. 2. But it is fine tuning and, realistically, there is not much to choose between them.

The women's rankings are rather less clear-cut. It is not Javer's fault, but she should be the British No. 1. She is patently absurd. She only became eligible to play for Britain two years ago, still lives in her native California and, for whatever reason, refused to represent Britain in team competitions last year. Jo Durie, who has always answered the call of country and who was for much of the year the leading British player in the rankings, is understandably upset at being demoted.

A recommendation will be put to the management committee of the LTA next month which hopefully will clear up the mess. It should not be beyond the wit of the LTA to devise a points system based on a combination of world rankings, representative international matches and the national championships to produce a genuine rankings list. Failing that, perhaps we ought to go back to the old

days when the tennis writers decided the rankings.

Bates, at least, struggled into his suit yesterday to accept his award. Javer, confined to her bed back home in northern California, received hers by proxy. Awards of £1,000 for the players who have made the most significant progress in 1989 went to Nick Brown and Sarah Bentley. James Turner and Belinda Borneo received £500 for their industry and effort during the year, while Samantha Smith, aged 18, and Paul Robinson, aged 15, won £600 each in the junior category.

BRITISH RANKINGS (1989 placings in parentheses): Men 1, J. Bates (No. 1); 2, N. Brown (No. 2); 3, C. Bailey (No. 3); 4, A. Cassie (No. 4); 5, J. Turner (No. 5); 6, M. Javer (No. 6); 7, M. Javer (No. 7); 8, D. Bates (No. 8); 9, S. Bentley (No. 9); 10, J. Turner (No. 10); 11, J. Turner (No. 11); 12, J. Turner (No. 12); 13, J. Turner (No. 13); 14, J. Turner (No. 14); 15, J. Turner (No. 15); 16, J. Turner (No. 16); 17, J. Turner (No. 17); 18, J. Turner (No. 18); 19, J. Turner (No. 19); 20, J. Turner (No. 20); 21, J. Turner (No. 21); 22, J. Turner (No. 22); 23, J. Turner (No. 23); 24, J. Turner (No. 24); 25, J. Turner (No. 25); 26, J. Turner (No. 26); 27, J. Turner (No. 27); 28, J. Turner (No. 28); 29, J. Turner (No. 29); 30, J. Turner (No. 30); 31, J. Turner (No. 31); 32, J. Turner (No. 32); 33, J. Turner (No. 33); 34, J. Turner (No. 34); 35, J. Turner (No. 35); 36, J. Turner (No. 36); 37, J. Turner (No. 37); 38, J. Turner (No. 38); 39, J. Turner (No. 39); 40, J. Turner (No. 40); 41, J. 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